

THE STRAITS TIMES

Singapore's fastest growing firms

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Opinion Taxing the super-rich back in vogue A17



Sport Top women golfers set to tee off C10



Hanoi rolls out the red carpet for Kim and Trump



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and United States President Donald Trump arrived yesterday in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi for their second summit, which is being watched closely for tangible progress on the North's nuclear programme. After a three-day train journey from Pyongyang, Mr Kim arrived at the border station of Dong Dang (left) to a red-carpet welcome that included an honour guard and military band. He later set off by car for Hanoi. Mr Trump arrived at Noi Bai International Airport (above) yesterday evening, waving as he disembarked from Air Force One, and was met by senior Vietnamese officials. His motorcade passed crowds waving the flags of Vietnam, the US and North Korea on its way to the JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi, where he is staying. PHOTOS: REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE [SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6&7](#)

CGH and doc found guilty of negligence

Changi General Hospital (CGH) has been found guilty of negligence in diagnosing a lung cancer patient and told to settle with her.

The patient had sued the hospital and three of its doctors, claiming that their negligence delayed the diagnosis and resulted in the cancer spreading. She now has Stage IV cancer.

Yesterday, the Appeals Court found the hospital and one of the doctors guilty.

It said poor follow-up procedures and systems led to the diagnosis being delayed. In the meantime, the cancer had spread.

The court said if the cancer had been diagnosed earlier, "we find it unlikely that the lung cancer would have progressed to Stage IIA".

The aggressive cancer has since spread to the patient's brain.

[SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A5](#)

Merdeka package not timed for election: Chee Hong Tat

Such schemes cannot be rolled out at start of Govt's term as surpluses need to be earned

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

The Merdeka Generation Package (MGP) and its timing were a focus on day one of the Budget debate yesterday.

Senior Minister of State Chee Hong Tat rebutted Workers' Party chief Pritam Singh's remark that some see the \$6.1 billion set aside for those born in the 1950s as being timed to coincide with the election.

Mr Chee said it was misleading to

link the MGP – or the Pioneer Generation Package (PGP) unveiled in 2014 – to election cycles.

The reason, he said, was that such schemes cannot be rolled out at the start of the Government's five-year term as surpluses need to be earned, accumulated and put aside to fund healthcare and other benefits.

At the start of its term, the Government will not know how much surpluses it will accrue or how much it can set aside, he added.

This is also part of "what a responsible government needs to do to en-

sure that our policies and programmes are financially sustainable for the current and future generations", he said.

Some 500,000 Singaporeans will benefit from the Merdeka package, which includes subsidies for outpatient care, MediShield Life premiums and Medisave top-ups. Details of when these will be rolled out will be announced next week.

Earlier in the debate, Mr Singh (Aljunied GRC) said people on the ground feel that the package helps seniors with their medical bills.

"There are also quarters who conclude it is pungently timed with the election cycle, giving off the odour of an unfair advantage aimed at the electoral prospects of the PAP," he

said. These words prompted Mr Chee to say pointedly: "I wonder why Workers' Party (WP) chose to use such an unpleasant description and to focus on politicising this tribute to our Merdeka Generation."

He added: "The opposition calls for the Government to give more, and yet, when the Government gives more to help Singaporeans, the WP criticises the move as an election tactic. We can't have it both ways, please make up your mind and decide where you stand."

The next general election must be held by April 2021, but many expect it to be called some time next year.

People's Action Party backbencher Murali Pillai (Bukit Batok

also took on Mr Singh's remarks about the package's timing.

Mr Murali said it is a "fortunate situation" that the Government is able to fund the package using the current reserves.

"Members sometimes forget that whatever we budget for in this House does not define what will happen for the financial year," he said, noting that market circumstances would dictate whether there are sufficient resources.

"To ascribe a political motive, to say that the MGP is timed for elections, really elevates the Government to a position of being a fortune teller."

Mr Singh and fellow WP members Faisal Manap (Aljunied GRC) and Non-Constituency MP Daniel Goh also called for the Government to move beyond one-off benefit schemes like the MGP, towards a universal and permanent healthcare package for Singaporeans from the age of 60.

In reply, Mr Chee said the MGP and PGP are on top of structural subsidies already provided for Singaporeans. Lower and middle-income citizens also get help with their MediShield Life premiums.

A total of 27 MPs spoke on a broad range of economic and social issues. Labour MPs, in particular, focused on how to improve the lives of Singaporean workers amid technological disruption.

MPs also raised concerns over cuts to the foreign worker quotas for companies in the service sector.

Mr Chee, speaking in his Trade and Industry portfolio, noted that the move would cause some pain, but said it was better to act now to secure jobs for citizens.

The debate resumes today, and Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat will respond to MPs' comments tomorrow.

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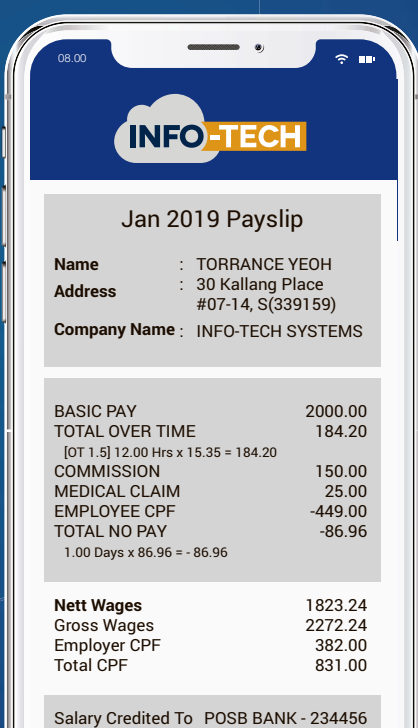
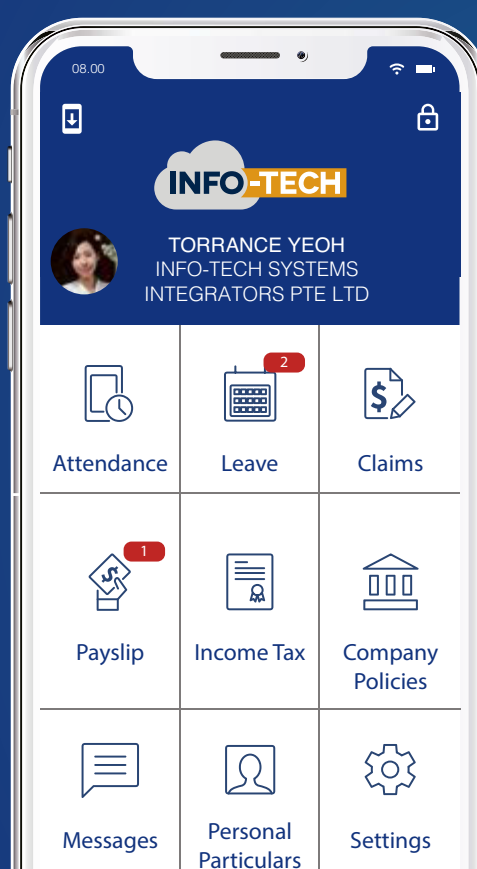


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10 must-reads for today

1 Air strike raises tensions
India said its fighter jets destroyed a major terrorist camp in Pakistan in the worst escalation between the nuclear-armed rivals since 2001. Islamabad described the incident, which killed more than 300, as a "grave aggression", and said it would respond "at the time and place of its choosing". **WORLD A10**



Indian residents in Bikaner, in Rajasthan state, celebrating the Indian Air Force strike on the Jaish-e-Mohammed camp at Balakot. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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INTERACTIVE

A look at school bus fees

How does your child's school bus fee stack up when compared with those charged by other operators? Find out as The Straits Times examines the figures of 127 primary schools. <http://str.sg/schoolbusfees>



VIDEO

Good prospects

Mr Andrew Yeo graduated with a private degree but could not land a job he wanted. He later pursued his master's at the London School of Economics and found good jobs. He tells those in private schools not to give up. <http://str.sg/ptepath>

2 Package not timed for polls

The Government has rebutted Workers' Party chief Pritam Singh's remark that some see the \$6.1 billion Merdeka Generation Package as timed to coincide with the election. On day one of the debate on Budget 2019, Senior Minister of State Chee Hong Tat cited the reasons for the timing of the package. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

4 Taxing the US super-rich

A battle over taxes could be a dominant theme in the next US presidential election. And if the Democrats win, there is a good chance that the era of low income taxes for the super-rich will be over, says associate editor Vikram Khanna (below). **OPINION A17**



5 More inmates above age 60

Of the 9,471 people admitted to prison or the Drug Rehabilitation Centre last year, 486 were aged above 60, according to Singapore Prison Service statistics. This is the first time in 10 years that the number has risen beyond 400. **HOME B3**

6 Limits to hiring checks

No check system is completely effective in spotting problematic persons among potential employees, said Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education Low Yen Ling.

She said Mikhy Farrera Brochez, the man behind the HIV Registry leak, had cleared checks by two polytechnics and had shown good subject knowledge during interviews. **HOME B8**

8 Factory output contracts

Weaker performances by the electronics and precision engineering sectors, as well as the ongoing trade tensions, dampened manufacturing output last month, in the first year-on-year fall since December 2017. **BUSINESS C1**

10 Smartphone users' wish list

New launches at Mobile World Congress 2019 in Barcelona this week focused on foldable phones and supporting 5G. But is this what users really want? Smartphone makers should focus on extending battery life and making better cameras for phones, says Trevor Tan. **LIFE D4**

9 A golfer who craves routine

Life has not changed much for English golfer Georgia Hall (right) since winning her first Major at last year's Women's British Open. And she is still as superstitious – from counting all 14 golf clubs to touching every one twice to the way she marks her balls. The 22-year-old will also wear the same pair of shoes for the whole tournament. **SPORT C10**



ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

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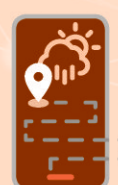
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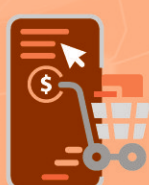
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WATCH FEATURED SUBJECT TO STOCK AVAILABILITY

Budget 2019 debate

Foreign worker quotas cut to protect S'poreans' jobs, says Chee Hong Tat

It'll be painful for some firms but decision was made in bid to avoid sociopolitical problems, he says

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

Jobs for Singaporeans will be lost and sociopolitical problems could flare up if the country does not control the number of foreign workers, said Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Chee Hong Tat.

Mr Chee told Parliament yesterday that such problems have occurred in other countries, and this is why the Government reduced the foreign worker quotas for the service sector despite knowing there would be an impact on some companies.

His response came after several MPs questioned the decision to lower the Dependency Ratio Ceiling in 2020 and 2021 for the ser-

vice industry.

MPs argued that the move would raise business and labour costs for the service sector.

Nominated MP Douglas Foo said the quota cuts are the main concern of the business sector, given its labour constraints.

"No matter how technology may alleviate operational demands, a lack of readily available human resource, which will invariably in turn drive up already increasing labour costs, will work in tandem to drive businesses out of Singapore or out of business altogether," he added.

Ms Denise Phua (Jalan Besar GRC) said the hospitality, food and beverage, arts, entertainment and other lifestyle sectors will likely be hit hardest.

She cited the predicament of Cube Boutique Hotel, whose owner Benedict Choa has adopted an innovative hotel model, automated its check-in system and worked with government agencies to transform

some of its processes.

"Ben is all ready to employ any local staff willing to work, if he can only find them," she added.

How can the Government help such companies that are aligned with the national direction and yet still face manpower challenges, asked Ms Phua.

Mr Chee said at the end of yesterday's debate: "We knew it would be painful for the affected companies, and we agonised over this difficult decision during our many rounds of inter-ministry discussions."

Ultimately, the Government decided that it was better to make a move now to control the overall number of foreign workers before the problem got out of hand.

He said the Government was aware of labour constraints in the service sector and how some firms have begun investing in productivity improvements, working closely with government agencies and industry associations.

"The hard work is starting to bear

fruit and we need to keep it up," added Mr Chee, noting how productivity has been rising steadily across sectors.

It rose 4.4 per cent for the accommodation segment in each year from 2013 to last year, 3.2 per cent for retail trade and 1.4 per cent for food services. Total manpower in the accommodation sector fell by 1 per cent in that period, while total room stock went up 4 per cent.

While technology cannot fully replace human roles, companies need to understand how it can improve products, reduce costs and raise the quality of services, said Mr Chee.

The Government will increase its support to help businesses transform, and has worked with industry associations for this purpose.

For example, the Productivity Solutions Grant will be enhanced to subsidise up to 70 per cent of out-of-pocket training expenses of eligible firms, up to \$10,000.

They can also access up to 70 per cent of government funding for transformation projects through an extended Enterprise Development Grant.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry's Pro-Enterprise Panel has been working with industry associations and companies to review regulations and look for ways to reduce licensing costs, Mr Chee noted.

Change can be a daunting challenge for businesses, but there is support if firms are willing, he said, adding: "Government agencies and industry associations will walk this journey together with you."

"If you want to transform and you are willing to put in effort to do so, we will help you."

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HELP AT HAND

Government agencies and industry associations will walk this journey together with you. If you want to transform and you are willing to put in effort to do so, we will help you.



SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY CHEE HONG TAT, on support for companies.

READ MORE

Reports from Parliament. [HOME](#) B4-6

WP chief calls for universal senior citizen healthcare package

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

A permanent senior citizen healthcare package for all Singaporeans from age 60 has been proposed by Workers' Party (WP) chief Pritam Singh, who said it will "represent a critical symbol of integration" among the people.

This basic level of medical benefits will also ease citizens' out-of-pocket expenses for primary healthcare and help them cope with the cost of living, he said yesterday, the first day of debate in Parliament on the 2019 Budget statement that was unveiled last week.

Mr Singh (Aljunied GRC) said such a healthcare package will also help the Government address feedback from the ground that schemes, such as the Pioneer Generation Package and Merdeka Generation Package, are timed with the election cycle or are unfair because some are left out.

There is an "inherent inequity" in the Government's packages for the earlier generations as some senior citizens, by virtue of their year of birth, miss out on a few years of medical benefits because of the interval between the one-time packages, he added.

Mr Singh, one of four WP MPs who spoke yesterday, also suggested how the WP's proposed healthcare scheme can be funded from the annual Budget.

First, the introduction of Temasek Holdings into the Net Investment Returns Contribution (NIRC) framework since 2016 brings an additional \$5 billion a year into the mix instantly and about \$25 billion across a five-year term of government, he said.

Despite greater spending needs going forward, the roughly 35 per cent increase in the NIRC from 2016 "goes some way to explain the healthy accumulated surpluses ac-

rued to this term of government from the opening of Parliament in 2016", he noted.

Second, he cited Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat's Budget statement that huge infrastructure projects will be partly funded through borrowing. Mr Singh asked whether this can free up revenue to fund recurrent spending.

"If it does, it would appear that funding such a universal and permanent healthcare initiative for our seniors cannot be dismissed as dishonest, unreasonable or imprudent," he said, citing adjectives that People's Action Party MPs had used in previous years when they shot down the WP's suggestions on public spending.

Last May, in the debate on the President's Address, the WP called for a relook of the 50 per cent cap on spending from the returns of the reserves. National Development Minister Lawrence Wong said it showed an "ill-disciplined, imprudent and unwise" mindset to relax the rules every time money was needed.

In last year's Budget debate, Mr Heng rapped the WP as "dishonest and irresponsible" for its stand on the proposed goods and services tax hike from 7 per cent to 9 per cent, expected to take effect some time from 2021 to 2025.

Mr Singh's call for the senior healthcare package was echoed by MP Faisal Manap (Aljunied GRC) and Non-Constituency MP Daniel Goh.

Responding to the proposal, Mr Chee Hong Tat, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry as well as Education, said there are quite a number of existing healthcare subsidies that are structural.

These include extra subsidies at polyclinics for seniors, and government subsidies and support to help low- and middle-income Singaporeans pay for MediShield Life premiums, he added.

"It is not quite accurate for Asso-



ciate Professor Goh to describe it as, Singaporeans pay for each other, (and the) Government save money. Actually, the Government pays quite a bit of the premiums through premium subsidies and additional premium support. This is part of the sharing," Mr Chee said.

The same principle applies to the upcoming disability insurance scheme CareShield Life, he said, adding that the Community Health Assist Scheme will be expanded to benefit more Singaporeans.

In his speech, Mr Singh also urged the Government to be more open and transparent in sharing information, pointing to the freedom of information law elsewhere.

"Increasingly, as we move into the future, the Government will not have all the answers," he said.

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Calling for a permanent healthcare package for senior citizens from age 60, Workers' Party chief Pritam Singh said this basic level of medical benefits would ease their out-of-pocket expenses and help them cope with living costs. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



SHARE INFORMATION TO FACILITATE CONVERSATIONS

If change is indeed going to be deeper and faster, then Singaporeans must be ready to become active participants of this process, with the Government facilitating conversations by sharing more information. A strong and united Singapore will not be built with some Singaporeans being made to feel that they must conform or support the Government's narrative with little room for alternative views.



WORKERS' PARTY CHIEF PRITAM SINGH

S'pore won't allow any foreign govt to assert authority in its waters: Vivian

Rachel Au-Yong
Political Correspondent

Singapore "will not allow any foreign government to assert any authority in our waters", Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said in a strongly worded statement in Parliament yesterday.

"If there are any attempts to assert authority or take any unauthorised actions, our agencies, our ves-

sels and our forces will take appropriate measures," he added.

He was replying to Nominated MP Walter Theseira, who asked about a collision earlier this month between Malaysian government vessel Polarix and Greek-registered bulk carrier Pireas in Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas.

Associate Professor Theseira also asked what measures can be taken to ensure that vessels, crew and passengers will not be subject to for-

eign authority while in Singapore territorial waters or for acts committed in Singapore territorial waters.

The collision on Feb 9 took place as the Pireas was on its way from Singapore to its next port of call, Tanjung Pelepas in Johor.

Dr Balakrishnan told the House that a Singapore Police Coast Guard vessel on site observed and recorded the collision. The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) was thus notified by the Maritime Secu-

riety Task Force and the Pireas itself.

And the MPA, having determined the incident was not a "very serious maritime casualty" under the International Maritime Organisation's code on casualties, allowed the vessel to proceed to its next port of call.

The minister noted that Pireas was not detained by the Malaysian authorities in Singapore waters.

Malaysia, on Oct 25 last year, unilaterally gazetted altered port limits that went beyond its past claims and

intruded into Singapore's territorial waters. Malaysian government vessels have also continued to intrude into those waters. Singapore has called on Malaysia to withdraw its ships and return to the status quo before Oct 25. It has also extended its port limits off Tuas to the full extent of its territorial waters, and both countries are in talks on the matter.

Prof Theseira also asked the minister what mariners should do if they were given instructions by

Malaysian vessels in Singapore waters, and what Singapore forces would do if they were to observe such attempts to give instructions.

Dr Balakrishnan said the waters have been designated as Singapore's port limits, hence, all vessels passing through should take instructions from MPA. "Any foreign government vessels have no *locus standi* to be issuing any instructions."

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CGH and doc found guilty of negligence in cancer diagnosis

Court ticks off hospital for serious inadequacies in procedures, and advises amicable settlement

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

Changi General Hospital (CGH) has been found negligent in a case where its lack of a proper system led to the delayed diagnosis of cancer in a patient. Instead of the lung cancer being detected at an early stage, it was diagnosed only after it spread to a lymph node.

Ms Noor Azlin Abdul Rahman, 39, is now fighting Stage IV cancer that has progressed to her brain. Had the condition been diagnosed earlier, “we find it unlikely that the lung cancer would have progressed to Stage IIA”, the Court of Appeal said.

Ms Noor Azlin had appealed after losing her case in February last year against the hospital and three of its doctors for negligence.

Yesterday, the Court of Appeal exonerated two emergency department doctors but found both the specialist, who attended to Ms Noor Azlin in 2007, and the hospital negligent in their care of the patient.

The court said that respiratory specialist Imran Mohamed Noor should not have discharged the patient when he was not certain that her suspected infection had cleared. He should have scheduled a follow-up consultation instead.

Ms Noor Azlin had gone to the hospital’s emergency department on various occasions in 2007, 2010 and 2011.

She had been referred to Dr Imran by the emergency department

in 2007 for an “opacity” in her lungs. He diagnosed her condition as an infection and told her to return if she had further problems.

Justice Andrew Phang, who delivered the court’s judgment, said that Dr Imran was “the last in line” examining the patient. He said: “There would have been no one else who would have been in a better position to conduct the necessary follow-up action.”

The court also said it could not be proven that Ms Noor Azlin had cancer at that time. But it said that Dr Imran should have been more cautious and scheduled a repeat consultation, even if the patient was asymptomatic.

The court was far more scathing about the hospital’s “serious inadequacies” in ensuring proper follow-up procedures for patients.

Ms Noor Azlin had X-rays taken in 2010 and 2011 and, both times, the radiologist recommended follow-up consultation.

The court said it had “grave concerns” over how the radiological reports were treated. It found “no record whatsoever of the senior doctor who had supposedly reviewed the radiological reports and who made the clinical decision” not to recall the patient.

The hospital’s procedures allow two senior doctors to decide against the radiologist’s recommendation of a follow-up. But the hospital did not require a record of who these doctors were and the reasons for their decisions.

As a result, not only did the pa-

tient not know about the decision, the court said, but “more worryingly...any doctor further down the line would have no reference against which to check why such a decision was made”.

It said such a lack of accountability was unacceptable.

The court also criticised the hospital for treating the patient’s problem as an isolated incident each time she turned up. Otherwise, the doctors seeing her later would know that the “opacity” in her lung had not been resolved as expected.

The court told CGH “to consider the possibility of settlement in the interests of expediency and resolution” as Ms Noor Azlin “will continue to face physical and emotional challenges as a result of her medical condition, and we think that an amicable settlement will assist the appellant in achieving some sense of closure and allow her to focus on battling her cancer and recovering as best as she can”.

Her lawyer, Mr Vijay Kumar Rai of Engelin Teh Practice, said she broke down when she heard the court judgment in her favour. She had had difficulty breathing and had been admitted to CGH on Monday, but has since been discharged.

Ms Noor Azlin told The Straits Times: “I am relieved for now, but the settlement has not been decided on.”

She said the medication she needs is very expensive, and not all of the cost is covered by Medifund. She is still working part-time at a corporate secretarial firm, which has been very supportive, in order to pay for it.

She accepts that there is no cure for Stage IV cancer, but she intends to fight it for as long as she can, say-



Ms Noor Azlin Abdul Rahman, 39, is fighting Stage IV cancer that has progressed to her brain. The Court of Appeal yesterday found both Changi General Hospital and a respiratory specialist negligent in the care given. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

ing: “I love my life too much, and the people around me. I don’t want my mum to worry.”

She lives with her parents. Her mother is 73 and her father 81.

When she agreed to have her photograph taken, she wanted time to put on her make-up. “No matter how sick I am, I don’t want to look like a cancer patient,” she said.

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Trump-Kim Hanoi summit

Fruit vendors making their way around the barricades in Hanoi yesterday as roads were blocked in preparation for the two leaders' arrival. ST PHOTOS: KUA CHEE SIONG



Tanks and soldiers stationed near the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi hotel in the Vietnamese capital drew the attention of both locals and tourists, who stopped to pose for pictures. Although the meeting venue has not been officially announced, security has been beefed up around the Metropole.

One-on-one chat, dinner to kick off leaders' meeting

Anticipation builds over whether Trump and Kim can agree on deal to break nuclear deadlock

Chang May Choon
South Korea Correspondent
In Hanoi

A one-on-one chat and dinner today will mark the beginning of the second meeting between United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, a day before they sit down in Vietnam to discuss the next step in North Korea's denuclearisation.

The two leaders arrived in Hanoi yesterday and are set to meet at least five times, as anticipation builds over whether they can agree on a deal to break the nuclear deadlock.

The US insists on sticking with sanctions until the North takes concrete steps such as submitting a list of nuclear weapons, while the North wants corresponding actions as it rolls back its programme.

The two-day Hanoi summit comes

eight months after the two leaders first met in Singapore last June and signed a four-point agreement to build new ties, establish a peace regime on the Korean peninsula, work towards full denuclearisation and return war remains.

Although the venue for the meeting has not officially been announced, security has been beefed up around the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi hotel.

National broadcaster Vietnam Television also dispatched crew there yesterday to lay cables for live feeds – suggesting the summit could be held at the luxury colonial hotel.

Mr Kim – who arrived in Hanoi after a dramatic 67½-hour train-and-car ride via China – has checked into the Melia Hanoi hotel. Mr Trump is staying at the JW Marriott hotel.

Both leaders are expected to meet the Vietnamese leadership during their time in Hanoi.

Mr Trump will greet Vietnamese President Nguyen Phu Trong and have a working lunch with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc today, according to the White House. Mr Kim is expected to do the diplomatic rounds after his summit with Mr Trump.

South Korean analysts gathered in Hanoi for the summit urged the two leaders to show mutual trust and agree to a specific road map for both sides to implement corresponding measures leading to North Korea's denuclearisation.

They added that key items on the table could include the dismantlement of North Korea's main Yongbyon nuclear facility, a peace declaration to end the 1950-53 Korean War, which was halted only by an armistice, and easing of some sanctions imposed on the North.

Dongguk University professor Koh Yu-hwan said the nuclear deadlock arose mainly from North Korea's misinterpretation of the Singapore agreement. "North Korea views it as a phased, simultaneous approach... but the US said denuclearisation must be front-loaded to build trust," he said at a forum in Hanoi yesterday.

Noting recent efforts by both sides to bridge the gap between them, Prof Koh said the success of the summit will depend on whether the two leaders can agree to a road map for implementation of agreed measures.

Handong University professor Kim Joon-hyung said the end-of-war declaration was supposed to be a gift from the US in return for North Korea closing its Tongchang-ri missile test site.

"But then the US thought it didn't match up and wanted a list of nuclear weapons as well. Now, North Korea is saying they can provide the Yongbyon card too, but they can't exchange it with just an end-of-war declaration; they also want sanctions lifted."

If Yongbyon can be included in the agreement with a deadline, the summit can be considered a great success, he added.

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Tanks roll in, hotels fill up as thousands descend on Hanoi

Tan Dawn Wei
China Bureau Chief
and Chang May Choon
South Korea Correspondent
In Hanoi

Hanoi traffic is manic enough on normal days, but it has become much worse this week as the city pulls out all the stops for the second summit between United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Downtown Hanoi was gridlocked for much of yesterday as roads were blocked to make way for the arrival of the two men, forcing legions of scooters – the favoured mode of transport for 7.5 million Hanoians – to take to the pavements to avoid the jam.

For this one week at least, life in Vietnam's capital city will be far from normal. Cafes have been told to clear their tables and chairs from the sidewalks, and some have been told to shut. Tanks have rolled in, much to the amusement of both tourists and locals, who cannot resist posing next to the armoured vehicles.

Yet, hotel receptionist Tam Mai, 30, simply shrugs when asked if the summit has disrupted her daily routine. "I ride a scooter to work, and traffic is always heavy anyway. I just leave a little earlier for work."

The city has gone through a discernible change over the past two weeks, she said. "The streets are cleaner. They planted flowers and banned big trucks from coming into the city. They have all been good preparations for the summit."

Hotels are running at full capacity and taxis are doing brisk business as thousands of journalists and diplomats from all over the world have descended on the city.

Bookie Dinh Xuan Cuong, 50, and his friend, businessman Hoang Xuan Thuy, 53, drove 100km on Monday from their home town of Haiphong to Hanoi, hoping to catch a glimpse of the two leaders.

Mr Thuy, sporting a commemorative Trump-Kim summit T-shirt and holding a US flag while milling

around a row of tanks near the Melia Hanoi hotel, claimed he was not specifically pro-Trump, but the shop he bought his flag from did not have a North Korean one.

"I hope President Trump and Mr Kim speak in peace and reduce nuclear weapons and keep peace in North and South Korea, and the people live in peace," Mr Cuong said in halting English.

Armed policemen moved in to stand guard outside the Melia Hanoi hotel on Monday afternoon, in preparation for Mr Kim's arrival. Another team took position around the JW Marriott hotel about 10km away, where Mr Trump was to stay after touching down on Air Force One last night.

Across the street from the Marriott, a banner depicting Mr Trump and Mr Kim smilingly holding hands hangs prominently at three-month-old Dewo hotpot restaurant. Manager Nguyen Van Quang, 29, said it was to "send a message of peace".

The banner was painted by a staff member of the restaurant, a day after it received notice on Feb 20 that the hotel would be a summit venue. The restaurant was later told by the authorities to close from last Saturday until tomorrow over security concerns.

That was no surprise. Mr Nguyen said the restaurant, along with others there, also had to shut when then US President Barack Obama stayed at the hotel in 2016.

"We understand the security concerns. But we still welcome the summit and hope for the best results. We hope it will bring hope of lasting peace for the entire world," he said.

Tour guide Tran Xuan The, 44, said the Vietnamese feel proud that their country is hosting the Trump-Kim summit.

"It shows that we are warm and hospitable, and our country is safe and can be trusted to organise this event," he said. "We hope this event will help raise the stature of Vietnam in the world, boost our economy and promote our tourist attractions."

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SummitBriefs

White House media staff forced to vacate hotel

SEOUL • US President Donald Trump's media headquarters for his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was forced to abruptly move from a Hanoi hotel yesterday, just hours before the North Korean leader arrived.

Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a tweet that the White House media centre would move from the Melia Hanoi hotel downtown to the location of the international media centre a few blocks away.

The Melia had informed guests on Monday that they would have to endure heightened security "due to the visit of a head of state staying at our hotel", without naming the person. BLOOMBERG

Half of North's defectors suffered violence: Poll

SEOUL • About half of 451 North Korean defectors questioned in a survey endured physical violence at the hands of the North Korean authorities, a rights group said yesterday, as leader Kim Jong Un prepared to meet US President Donald Trump for a summit.

A survey conducted between 2015 and last year and released by the Seoul-based Transitional Justice Working Group found that about 48 per cent said they personally experienced violence perpetrated by the North Korean authorities, including beating, torture, rape and other sexual assault. REUTERS

Travel company offers Hanoi summit tour

HANOI • The "Trump-Kim Vietnam Summit Tour" is being put on this week by travel company Young Pioneer Tours, whose slogan offers "destinations your mother would rather you stayed away from".

While the trip to the Vietnamese capital is not a daring one, it offers visitors a chance to be part of the flurry surrounding North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump's meeting. Stops include the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and the former "Hanoi Hilton" jail, where American prisoners of war were held. Also included are summit-specific sites such as the Melia Hanoi hotel, where Mr Kim will stay.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Vietnam plays host to Trump-Kim summit

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Trump-Kim Hanoi summit



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un leaving Dong Dang station in a car for Hanoi yesterday, surrounded by his bodyguards. He arrived in Vietnam after a three-day train journey from Pyongyang. PHOTO: DPA



United States President Donald Trump disembarking from Air Force One at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Hopes up as Kim, Trump arrive in Hanoi

Kim greeted by cheering crowds after journey by train and car; Trump flies in on Air Force One

HANOI • Hopes for a productive summit grew as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump arrived hours apart in Vietnam yesterday, cheered on by crowds in the capital Hanoi.

The two men are scheduled to meet today and embark on their second round of talks aimed at implementing North Korea's pledge to give up its nuclear weapons.

Mr Kim arrived by train early in the day after a three-day journey from his capital Pyongyang, through China.

Wearing his trademark Mao-style black suit, Mr Kim disembarked from his personal olive-green armoured train at Dong Dang station, after he crossed the border from

China, and was greeted by Vietnamese officials.

A military guard of honour in pristine white uniforms presented arms as Mr Kim strolled down the red carpet waving and grinning, surrounded by a phalanx of aides and security personnel.

Dong Dang station had been cordoned off since Monday, with soldiers and police positioned outside. The station received a last-minute facelift, with licks of fresh paint and new potted plants, for Mr Kim's brief welcoming ceremony.

Mr Kim's sister Kim Yo Jong, who has emerged as an important aide, arrived with him.

Also there to meet the North Korean leader were Mr Kim Hyok

Chol, who is the recently appointed counterpart of US North Korea envoy Stephen Biegun, and Mr Kim Chang Son, who is Mr Kim Jong Un's de facto chief of staff.

Ms Hoang Thi Thuy, a local official from the Dong Dang women's union, said she had waited in the cold rain since before dawn for a glimpse of Mr Kim.

"I was so excited when we were told to stand in place for the arrival of the train... When the train arrived, we saw the leader from afar. Seeing that, I felt so happy. It is hard to describe," said Ms Thuy.

Mr Kim was later ushered into a black Mercedes-Benz, his arm emerging from a rolled-down window to wave to onlookers.

Twelve bodyguards jogged alongside Mr Kim's car as he left the train station for Hanoi, where armoured personnel carriers patrolled the roads amid ultra-tight security.

In Hanoi, Mr Kim was greeted by cheering crowds behind barriers near the colonial-era pastel yellow Hanoi Opera House before arriving at the Melia Hanoi hotel, where he is staying this week. Hours later, he departed for the North Korean Embassy in Singapore, where he took in the sights on an unscheduled sortie.

Mr Trump took a more conventional route to the meeting, touching down on Air Force One, just before 9pm local time (10pm Singapore time) after flying halfway around the world from Washington.

Ahead of his departure for Vietnam, Mr Trump on Monday tweeted that he was looking forward to a very productive second summit.

He also dangled the carrot of economic progress for North Korea if it gives up its nuclear programme. "With complete denuclearisation, North Korea will rapidly become an

economic powerhouse... Chairman Kim will make a wise decision."

Their talks come eight months after the historic summit in Singapore, the first between a sitting US president and a North Korean leader.

While the first meeting was all about breaking the ice after decades of war and bitter animosity, this time, there will be pressure to move beyond the vaguely worded commitment they made in Singapore to work towards the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

Both leaders will meet at the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi, a luxury hotel with a rich history, in the heart of the capital, Yonhap reported.

Mr Kim's summit with Mr Trump is scheduled to begin with a private dinner this evening, the White House announced, followed by a series of official meetings tomorrow.

Mr Trump will be joined by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Act-

ing White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney for the dinner. Mr Kim will also have two aides present, and both men will have translators.

Mr Trump is scheduled to meet Vietnam's leaders today before his dinner with Mr Kim.

Mr Kim's schedule in Vietnam has not been publicly announced. Diplomats based in Hanoi said Mr Kim might visit the industrial town of Haiphong and the nearby picturesque tourist site of Ha Long Bay, where limestone karsts rise out of emerald seas.

"On his train trip back, Chairman Kim can drop by Beijing and debrief President Xi Jinping on the outcome of the second summit," said Dr Cheong Seong-chang, an expert at South Korea's Sejong Institute.

Mr Trump will fly straight back to Washington after the summit.

WASHINGTON POST, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS, BLOOMBERG

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THE TOP 10

1. BR Metals

The company recycles precious metals. It aims to provide a viable alternative to deep-earth mining, which causes serious environmental damage. It also wants to set a new standard in Asia's precious metal recycling industry.
Compound annual growth rate: 252.6%

2. Nuffield Dental Holdings

The dentistry business provides a range of services, from implants to braces, and dentures to wisdom tooth surgery.
Compound annual growth rate: 186.8%

3. V-Key

The firm specialises in digital security for mobile applications. Its patented technology, called V-OS, is certified and in use by government agencies, payment gateways and major banks.
Compound annual growth rate: 150.8%

4. Aureus Group

Aureus Academy is a music school in Singapore that specialises in one-to-one lessons for piano, violin, guitar and other instruments, as well as vocals. It was founded in 2013 and now has more than 4,000 students, 150 employees and 10 centres islandwide.
Compound annual growth rate: 144.9%

5. Grain

The food and beverage company delivers healthy meal boxes to customers. It also offers catering services for large events such as seminars, workshops or parties.
Compound annual growth rate: 129.9%

6. Triple

The lifestyle retailer distributes products across bricks-and-mortar stores as well as through e-commerce platforms. It also holds exclusive distribution rights for brands such as Under Armour, Odlo, Newline, C3Fit and EverySecond Counts across South-east Asia.
Compound annual growth rate: 128.6%

7. OneCare Holdings

The medical group has around 20 family physicians providing primary care consultations. It offers a range of services, including medical imaging, corporate health schemes and preventive medicine and health screenings.
Compound annual growth rate: 113.3%

8. Catapult Ventures

The firm operates consumer finance platforms such as MoneySmart.sg, which helps consumers maximise financial decisions by assisting in the comparison of loans, insurance and credit cards.
Compound annual growth rate: 102.5%

9. KC Group

The company runs hairstylist and skincare businesses. One of these is kcuts, which provides Korean-style haircuts in 10 minutes. It has around 40 outlets in Singapore.
Compound annual growth rate: 97.5%

10. A Yong

A Yong is a one-stop shop in the fresh produce industry, providing a wide range of fresh and processed fruit and vegetables customised to client requirements. The processing service includes peeling, cutting, coring, de-seeding, slicing, and packaging by weight, size and mix requirements.
Compound annual growth rate: 97%

Sue-Ann Tan

SCAN TO WATCH
Full list of Spore's fastest-growing firms. <http://str.sg/fastest85>



BR Metals production staff sorting scrap catalytic converters for de-canning and milling. BR Metals secured the top spot in the list of fastest-growing businesses, with a compound annual growth rate of over 250 per cent from 2014 to 2017. PHOTO: BR METALS

Metals recycling firm claws its way to the top with grit

BR Metals among 85 local firms that had high revenue growth between 2014 and 2017

Sue-Ann Tan

Companies that set the pace these days tend to be in the technology sector, but one of Singapore's fastest-growing firms is in the far from glamorous field of recycling precious metals.

BR Metals started operations here in 2014, and from that point to 2017, recorded a compound annual growth rate of over 250 per cent.

Its remarkable expansion helped it secure the top spot in a study undertaken last year by global research company Statista and The Straits Times to find the country's fastest-growing businesses.

Companies had to meet certain criteria to be considered for the list, such as having generated revenue of at least \$150,000 in 2014 and at least \$1,500,000 in 2017, excluding any investment or funds injection.

The study came up with a league table of 85 local companies that achieved high revenue growth between 2014 and 2017. Most are privately run small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

BR Metals managing director Frank Chen said: "The challenges we encountered along the way were not dissimilar to those faced by other SMEs."

"These included intensifying competition, supply issues, price wars and the labour crunch in Singapore. We tackled these challenges head-on with strategic planning, automation and market segmentation, along with the same

gritty determination and never-say-die attitude like the other companies that have made the list."

Straits Times editor Warren Fernandez, who is also editor-in-chief of Singapore Press Holdings' English/Malay/Tamil Media Group, noted: "In a fast-changing economy, companies which are growing rapidly have a special cache as everyone wants a piece of the action."

"We wanted to identify these players and showcase how they were moving ahead. We are happy to work with our partners, Statista, on this project, given their good track record on data analytics projects of this sort with other leading media brands internationally."

Dr Thomas Clark, associate partner and responsible for corporate development and international affairs at German-based Statista, said the main point of the study was to find out which firms were the accelerators of the economy. He said: "This list is interesting because it highlights companies you won't find on the regular pages in the business section of a newspaper."

"They are usually too young and too small to be featured there. Yet, they are often very interesting. So, the list helps to find out how vibrant some of these 'growth champions' are and what business models they have."

Overall, the average compound annual growth of Singapore's fastest-growing companies between 2014 and 2017 was 49 per cent.

While BR Metals rules the roost, technology companies are at the

forefront of the rankings, which Dr Clark said is not surprising for Singapore given its emphasis on digital innovation. "Comparing it to other countries, though, having technology at the front may not be that obvious. In Italy, for instance, many of the growth champions deal with food or luxury products."

"In that sense, the cliches you have of a given economy are reflected in these lists and turn out to be true to a certain extent."

He noted that high-tech security firms and medical service providers, such as dental companies, were also high on the list.

Nuffield Dental came in second with a compound annual growth rate of around 180 per cent, and V-Key, which creates digital security technology for mobile applications, was next with a rate of about 150 per cent.

V-Key co-founder and chief executive Joseph Gan said the company's technology has to be robust and ready for mass deployment.

"Our main challenges were ensuring our solutions were able to support and meet the expectations of our customers and ensuring the right commercial models that our customers expect were in place."

The firm grew from a team of three in 2011 to around 100 today.

Healthcare provider OneCare, which ranked seventh, started with a clinic in Boon Lay that had three doctors and three clinic staff in 2013, but now employs 100 staff and around 20 doctors in 16 clinics. It registered a compound annual growth rate of around 113 per cent.

Dr Eve Anwar, director of public relations at OneCare Medical, advised other firms to devote the time and energy to discovering the

operation's sense of identity, and operating principles and ethics.

"Distil your company to a simple set of target outcomes, and look back to those targets at every crossroads in your business journey," she added.

Giantech Engineering, 57th on the list, started out with one man operating out of a Housing Board flat in 2001 under a different name. It is now a recognised service agent for many types of specialised marine equipment, and assists ship owners and fleet managers with their tanker needs.

Other firms grew alongside their adoption of new technologies.

Mr Tay Kim Yong and Mr Tan Sze Yong, the directors of fresh produce distributor A Yong, said they use automatic operations to process fruits and vegetables more efficiently, while retaining traditional methods to handle processes that no machine available can tackle. The company ranked 10th.

A-Plus Automation (S), which ranked 18th, branched out into the online market in the last few years as well. The firm specialises in designing, manufacturing and installing automated systems for handling and sorting products.

Managing director Rodney Ham said: "Since entering into the e-commerce industry, it gives us great opportunity to expand our business throughout the South-east Asia region."

Statista's Dr Clark said: "These companies succeed by putting a little twist on traditional business models and serving customers in new ways."

suetan@sph.com.sg

Methodology

Singapore's Fastest Growing Companies is a list of 85 local firms that achieved markedly high revenue growth between 2014 and 2017.

Companies keen to get on the league table had to register via websites created by Statista and The Straits Times from July to October last year.

There were strict criteria – they had to be independent firms headquartered in Singapore with revenue generated of at least \$150,000 in 2014 and \$1.5 million in 2017.

Statista also examined the officially stated revenue data of more than 570 public companies here after the application phase. All which met the criteria were added to the list.

The calculation of growth rates was based on the revenue figures submitted by the companies in the respective national currencies. These figures were then converted into Singapore dollars for comparison.

The result is a list of companies ranked by compound annual growth rate, which is calculated by taking into account revenue growth over the three-year period.

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This ability to move with the times enabled the company to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 86 per cent from 2014 to 2017.

That stellar growth put the firm at 14th place on a list of fastest-growing enterprises compiled by The Straits Times and global research company Statista.

Director and co-founder Patricia Lin said: "The landscape of the digital marketing industry is ever-changing, and what used to work before may not work today. Just think about how platforms like MySpace and Friendster have been phased out in just a matter of a few years."

"We find ourselves needing to keep up with the phase of industry changes in order to be aware of the changes in consumer behaviours in the market."

The firm specialises in helping small businesses to gain exposure and leads through digital marketing strategies that are customised to a client's needs.

Ms Lin started the company with



Ms Patricia Lin and Mr Calvin Woon, directors and co-founders of Zion Global Marketing, which is ranked 14th on the list of the fastest-growing enterprises compiled by The Straits Times and Statista. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

co-founder and director Calvin Woon back in 2009, when digital marketing was still rather uncommon. She said: "At that time, digital marketing wasn't a popular marketing strategy, and platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter were just gaining traction."

"But we happened to get ex-

posed to the concept of creating and selling digital products such as e-books, audio courses and videos on the Internet, and started our company in the area of digital publishing."

"As we delved deeper into the industry, we realised how powerful the Internet was in helping

KEEPING UP WITH CHANGE

We find ourselves needing to keep up with the phase of industry changes in order to be aware of the changes in consumer behaviours in the market.



ZION GLOBAL MARKETING DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER PATRICIA LIN

businesses to market and reach out to millions of people throughout the world."

This forward-looking mindset has helped Ms Lin grow the company: Starting with just the two founders, there are now around 30 staff to help them.

Annual revenue is around \$7 mil-

lion, with the goal of surpassing \$10 million this year.

The company also provides services in event marketing and organisation together with a training arm that teaches other business owners to market themselves in a digital world.

However, Ms Lin acknowledged that it has not been an easy road, noting: "Just like any business, the starting phase was extremely difficult and we went through several ups and downs along the way."

"As we were fresh out of university with zero corporate experience, we had to learn from scratch through making mistakes."

Her advice to other small businesses is: "Turn business into a game and ensure everyone knows how to keep the score."

She added: "We all love playing games as it is fun and people love the thrill of winning. So, if you can think of how to 'gamify' the various aspects of business, it will make work more fun and exciting for everyone on your team. And of course, it will help you accelerate your growth as well."

"Lastly, never stop learning."

Sue-Ann Tan

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OF CHILD SEX ABUSE **A16**

Indian police officers chasing Kashmiri Muslim protesters during clashes that erupted after an anti-terror agency raided the house of top separatist leader Mohammad Yasin Malik in Srinagar yesterday.
PHOTO: EPA-EFE



Indian fighter jets strike Pakistan terror camp

Up to 300 dead, claims Indian media; Pakistan says no one killed

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

India launched air strikes yesterday against a terrorist training camp hidden on a hilltop amid thick forests in Pakistan, in what it called a pre-emptive strike to prevent further terror attacks.

It was the worst escalation in tensions between the two nuclear-armed rivals since 2001.

Indian officials said the training camp belonged to Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a Pakistan-based terror group that claimed credit for the Feb 14 suicide bombing in which 40 paramilitary soldiers were killed in Pulwama district in Kashmir.

India had blamed Pakistan for having a "direct role" in the attack and had warned of reprisals.

In the air assault, 12 Mirage 2000

single-engine fighter jets dropped bombs on the camp, reported ANI news agency.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale said the air strike was a pre-emptive attack on a non-military installation.

It was conducted because India had received intelligence that suicide bombers were being trained in the camp in Balakot town, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, more than 50km from the Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border between the two countries.

Mr Gokhale said the camp was run by Maulana Yousuf Azhar, the brother-in-law of JeM founder Masood Azhar. "Credible intelligence was received that JeM was attempting another suicide terror attack... and (militants) were being trained for this purpose. In the face of imminent danger, a pre-emptive strike became absolutely necessary," he said. Mr Gokhale added that "a very large number" of JeM terrorists, trainers, senior commanders and militants were killed.

Indian media reported up to 300

militants were dead, citing government sources. Pakistan, however, denied there was any casualty or damage. Military spokesman Asif Ghafoor also claimed that the air strikes had hit open land.

"Under forced hasty withdrawal, (Indian) aircraft released payload which had free fall in open area. No infrastructure got hit, no casualties," he tweeted, revealing that Pakistan had scrambled its jets.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said: "India has violated the LoC and Pakistan reserves the right to give a befitting response."

The country's National Security Committee said it "strongly rejected Indian claims of targeting an alleged terrorist camp near Balakot and the claim of heavy casualties."

It warned that "Pakistan shall respond at the time and place of its choosing" to India's aggression.

Pakistan also accused India of violating the ceasefire signed in 2003.

The two countries have fought three wars over Kashmir and regularly exchange fire across the de

facto border in spite of the ceasefire.

India has for years demanded action against Pakistan-based terror groups like JeM and Lashkar-e-Taiba which have carried out multiple attacks in India, including the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks which killed 166 people.

In 2016, India carried out surgical strikes on terrorist launch pads along the border in retaliation for an attack on an Indian army base in Uri in Kashmir that killed 19 soldiers.

Within India, the latest air strikes gained support across an otherwise deeply divided polity. Opposition Congress' president Rahul Gandhi tweeted: "I salute the pilots of the IAF (Indian Air Force)."

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah tweeted: "The post-Uri strike was to avenge our losses, Balakot was a pre-emptive strike to prevent an imminent JeM attack. Totally new ball game."

With elections scheduled to take place before May, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been under pressure to take some kind of military action following the Pulwama attack. At a rally in Rajasthan yesterday after the air strikes, he said: "I want to assure you, India is in safe hands."

For now, speculation is mounting within India over how Pakistan may retaliate.

Said Air Vice-Marshal (Retired) Manmohan Bahadur: "They have to decide how much they want to escalate. Do they want to go to war?"

gnirmala@sph.com.sg



PHOTO: REUTERS

12

Number of Mirage 2000 single-engine fighter jets deployed.

40

Number of soldiers killed on Feb 14, in a suicide bombing in Pulwama district in Kashmir.

Kashmiris hoard food, fuel in panic amid India-Pakistan row

NEW DELHI • Kashmir is in the midst of panic as people hoard food and fill up on fuel amid growing tensions between India and Pakistan following the recent Pulwama terrorist attack.

The state has been on edge since a suicide bomber rammed a car laden with 350kg of explosives into a bus carrying paramilitary soldiers from the Central Reserve Police Force on Feb 14, killing 44 and triggering an outpouring of national outrage.

India has blamed Pakistan for the attack and stepped up security operations in Kashmir.

The federal government rushed in more than 10,000 paramilitary soldiers over the weekend while police arrested 100 political activists, including separatist leader Yasin Ma-

lik, in the last couple of days.

Locals and politicians say the sense of panic has increased due to leaked government orders, including one asking hospitals to stock up on medicines and another from the food supplies department asking shops to sell food grains quickly.

These orders have been shared on social media, resulting in long queues at petrol pumps and mass buying at grocery stores.

Former Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti, leader of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), tweeted: "There is a sense of unease and panic in Kashmir. Nobody has a clue about what is to come but an ominous feeling of impending doom hangs in the air."

Kashmir has a troubled history



People seen preparing a bunker for emergency situations in Kashmir on Sunday amid growing tensions between India and Pakistan. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

and is at the heart of the conflict between India and Pakistan, which have gone to war three times over it.

An armed separatist insurgency that started in 1989 has led to the death of thousands of people.

And in recent years, there has been a deterioration of law and or-

der, with youth pelting stones at security forces.

The latest terror incident took place ahead of the election season and just as the Supreme Court is set to hear a batch of petitions challenging a law, which gives special status to Kashmir residents, including the

privilege that only long-term residents can own land.

Kashmir-based political analyst Siddiq Wahid said that the challenge to the law, known as Article 35A, is unique to Kashmir and has added to the anxiety.

"The stocking up of foodstuffs, petrol and such appears to have resulted from either 'leaks' or inadvertent sharing of government orders to stock up on these items to various departments, including the state's Department of Health and its Department of Supplies," he said.

"However, (due to) talk of war with Pakistan (in the wake of the attack in Pulwama) and the imminent Supreme Court hearing on an aspect of the constitutional status of the state, people appear to have become anxious. There is a sense that something is brewing."

He said the air strikes yesterday against a Jaish-e-Mohammed terror training camp in Pakistan had added to the nervousness. "We are in the crossfire and seen as the cause of all this."

Other developments since the Pulwama attack, including the targeting of Kashmiri students by Hindu nationalists in different

parts of the country, had also added to the sense of unease in the Kashmir Valley, he added.

Kashmir does not have a state government. It has been under governor rule or federal rule since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) pulled out of a ruling coalition in June that included the PDP.

Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Satya Pal Malik said in a statement on Sunday: "People should not believe in rumours, which are of extreme nature and circulating widely in some quarters. They should remain calm. These rumours are unnecessarily creating an atmosphere of fear in the minds of people, leading to stress and disruption to normal life. Rumours about curfews and other actions should not be believed."

Dr Hina Bhat of the BJP said: "Elements in our own country that are affecting peace have to be removed. In Jammu and Kashmir, people have seen so many forces for the first time on the streets. They are getting panicked. The forces are there so that situation is under control. It is for peace."

Nirmala Ganapathy

Fewer hot spots but haze in parts of Riau

Poor visibility in some areas from forest fires amid dry season

Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

The number of hot spots in Indonesia's Riau province has declined, although poor visibility has been reported in some areas, particularly in the east, because of forest fires.

Antara news agency said thick haze has blanketed parts of the province and forced schools to send students home.

The number of hot spots came down from 54 last Friday to 23 yesterday, said Mr Sukisno, head of the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics agency at Pekanbaru in Riau.

But the number has been fluctuating, with 44 recorded last Saturday and 47 on Sunday.

On Monday, it went down to 32. The Indonesian military has deployed an aircraft to the province and Mr Sukisno, who goes by one name, said cloud-seeding operations to induce rain should begin today.

Visibility in Riau's Rupat island in the Malacca Strait was as low as 100m, Antara reported, citing the local authority. The island off the city of Dumai has not received any rainfall for about a month.

"Some areas in the eastern part of Riau have not seen rain since mid-January. During the dry season like now, we do experience rainfall but within the light to moderate range," Mr Sukisno told The Straits Times.

"Eastern parts of Riau, a coastal area, generally see lower rainfall than the province's inland areas in the west."

There are currently no hot spots in the western part of Riau.

"Wind direction trends during the February-March period are easterly and north-easterly (blowing from east towards west and from north-east towards south-west), or away from Singapore," Mr Sukisno added.

Riau has two dry seasons a year – February-March and June-August – and the wind direction in the latter season would be towards the north-east, or in the direction of Singapore and the Malaysian peninsula, Mr Sukisno said.

Most other parts of Indonesia experience the dry season only once a year.

It is between April and September on the most populous island of Java, and the rest of the year is considered the rainy season.

Forest fires were among the issues that cropped up during the recent presidential debate on Feb 17, with the incumbent, Mr Joko Widodo, touting his achievement in curbing the fires.

Mr Joko is facing former army general Prabowo Subianto, 67, in the April 17 polls.

Mr Joko, 57, popularly known as Jokowi, is seeking a second and final five-year term in office.

Mr Joko's campaign managers say the current administration has managed to reduce forest and plantation fires through stricter law enforcement and prevention measures.

"During Jokowi's tenure, forest fires have been handled quickly and the problem did not persist," senior politician Lukman Edy, representing Mr Joko's campaign team, told the Jakarta-based Elshinta radio a day after the Feb 17 debate, the second of five scheduled to take place between the two main candidates before the poll.

Mr Lukman said that there had been only one major fire – in 2015 –

under Mr Joko. Previously, such incidents were annual occurrences.

"We almost never have forest fires any more. Lately, there were hot spots emerging, but firefighting teams promptly handled them," Mr Lukman said.

"Forest fires are unavoidable, but

the government now is there to deal with them, so the problem does not drag on."

There has hardly been any response from the Prabowo camp to the President's claims.

wahyudis@sph.com.sg



Personnel from the Indonesian disaster management agency, military and police fighting forest fires that spread towards a village in Dumai in Riau. Hot spots have been detected in the province's coastal regions. PHOTO: ANTARA

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LITTLE RAIN

Some areas in the eastern part of Riau have not seen rain since mid-January. During dry season like now, we do experience rainfall but within the light to moderate range.



MR SUKISNO, head of the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics agency at Pekanbaru in Riau.

Relief and dread over China tariff hike delay

Some US industry groups, lawmakers fear Chinese will not change trade practices

WASHINGTON • President Donald Trump's decision to delay a steep tariff hike on Chinese goods as he touts progress in weekend trade talks has been greeted with a mixture of relief and dread among US industry groups and lawmakers.

Some expressed concerns that after nearly eight months of tit-for-tat tariffs roiling global financial markets, disrupting manufacturing

supply chains and shrinking US farm exports, Mr Trump could end up settling for a deal that increases commodity sales to Beijing while doing little to change China's underlying trade practices and industrial policies.

Mr Trump announced the delay on Sunday, without giving specifics, after his top trade negotiator Robert Lighthizer and Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He wrapped up seven days of "very productive talks". Tariffs on US\$200 billion (S\$270 billion) worth of Chinese imports had been set to rise to a prohibitive 25 per cent from the current 10 per cent if no deal was

reached by Friday.

"Glad 2 hear that Pres Trump won't be increasing tariffs on China March 1 but I hope Lighthizer/Trump won't take a half deal as a good deal," tweeted Senator Chuck Grassley, the Republican chairman of the trade and tax-focused Senate Finance Committee.

The Trump administration has been pressing China for specific commitments to protect intellectual property rights, and end cyber theft of trade secrets and practices that coerce US companies to turn over technology to Chinese firms.

The United States also wants to curb Beijing's industrial subsidies,

which Washington says fuel excess production. In his Feb 5 State of the Union address, Mr Trump said a China trade deal "must include real, structural change to end unfair trade practices, reduce our chronic trade deficit, and protect American jobs".

But as the March 1 deadline drew closer, Mr Trump appeared increasingly eager to make a deal, saying on several occasions that he might extend the deadline.

"Trump has clearly put his negotiators on notice that he wants a deal," said Dr Eswar Prasad, a trade professor at Cornell University and former head of the International Monetary Fund's China department.

"This raises the chances of a deal but makes it harder for the US to pressure China into making significant concessions related to its industrial and economic strategies."

Mr Trump has issued positive but cryptic statements and tweets about the delay and the nature of progress made at the weekend, saying that a deal with Beijing is "very, very close", and talking about a "signing summit" with Chi-

nese President Xi Jinping.

Farmers "will be treated better than they have ever been treated before!" if a deal is made, he tweeted.

While some industry groups, including the Retail Industry Leaders Association, cheered the delay for averting price increases on thousands of consumer goods, others simply called the delay "encouraging".

Democrats in Congress were more pointed, saying Mr Trump should be prepared to walk away from a bad deal.

"China's forced technology transfers and IP theft practices are unfair and must be addressed," said Representative Earl Blumenauer of Oregon, the new Democratic chairman of the House Ways and Means trade sub-committee.

Mr Lighthizer, who has been arguing for a tougher US stance on reforms to the Chinese economy for years, will update lawmakers on the progress of the talks when he testifies before the Ways and Means committee today.

REUTERS



Mr Robert Lighthizer wants a tougher US stance on reforms to the Chinese economy.

US firms in China less upbeat amid trade spat: Survey

Lim Yan Liang
China Correspondent
In Beijing

In the face of declining profitability and longstanding issues such as inconsistent regulations, American firms in China have tempered their growth and investment outlooks for this year, a new report has said.

Business optimism of these firms has also declined across the board, with growing concerns about cost and US-China tensions, said the American Chamber of Commerce in China (Amcham).

In its annual China Business Climate Survey report released yesterday, Amcham noted that 30 per

cent of the 314 members surveyed said overall profitability declined last year – the worst performance since 2015, when China experienced a stock market sell-off.

More than half of the respondents also forecast that their respective industries would grow by 5 per cent or less this year. This is a more conservative outlook than China's official economic target this year of 6 to 6.5 per cent, noted Mr Kevin Li, a partner in risk advisory at audit firm Deloitte, which helped prepare the report.

Two-thirds of respondents also said US-China trade tensions have affected longer-term business decisions, and more than a quarter are delaying or cancelling additional investments in China.



Outside Starbucks Coffee, an American chain, in Beijing. In its annual China Business Climate Survey report released yesterday, the American Chamber of Commerce in China noted that 30 per cent of 314 members surveyed said overall profitability fell last year – the worst performance since 2015. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Nevertheless, Amcham said China remains an important market for US businesses. A majority of those surveyed said the growing affluence of China's middle class remains a key opportunity.

Members also said China's investment environment had showed modest improvement, Amcham China chairman Tim Stratford said.

Even so, longstanding issues such as inconsistent regulatory interpretation and unclear laws and enforcement continue to be the top challenge for US firms in China, alongside the new problem of tension with the US, said Amcham China president Alan Beebe.

Mr Beebe noted that local and provincial governments have "a fair

amount of latitude" when it comes to implementing new policies and laws enacted by Beijing.

"There may be what we refer to as 'window guidance': where there is a written law or regulation, but verbally there may be additional points that are communicated to a company in order to receive a particular approval," he said.

Respondents had ranked improved regulatory transparency and predictability as the top factor to consider in deciding whether to invest further in China, ahead of better intellectual protection and industrial policies that favour Chinese firms.

Despite China's efforts in the past year to open up more parts of its market, Mr Beebe said lack of access still

significantly inhibits operations on the mainland – 73 per cent of respondents in the technology and other R&D-intensive sectors cited market restrictions as their top concern.

"Members indicated that (market access) was a key area they would like the US government to advocate on, which is a reciprocal investment environment whereby US companies would enjoy the same level of market access in China as Chinese companies enjoy in the US," he said.

Mr Stratford agreed, noting that Chinese reforms often took place in sectors where domestic firms were already dominant – such as in automobiles and e-payments – rather than cutting-edge industries where US and Chinese firms are still com-

peting head to head.

While a third of respondents said tit-for-tat tariffs have started to cause pain, more than half of respondents in a flash survey said they want tariffs to remain in place while trade talks continue, with the hope that this will motivate both sides to "push the ball across the goal line and finish the job", said Mr Stratford.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said yesterday that the seventh round of trade consultations that concluded last weekend "had made new progress", and that both sides were working towards reaching "a mutually beneficial and win-win conclusion as soon as possible".

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China's defence budget expected to rise

BEIJING • A slowing economy is unlikely to crimp China's 2019 defence budget rise, as Beijing earmarks more spending for modernisation and big-ticket items like stealth jets and focuses on Taiwan after a stern New Year's speech from President Xi Jinping.

The defence spending figure is closely watched worldwide for clues to China's strategic intentions as it develops new military capabilities, including aircraft carriers and anti-satellite missiles.

Last year, China unveiled its largest defence spending increase in three years, setting an 8.1 per cent growth target for the year, fuelling an ambitious military upgrade programme and making its neighbours nervous.

This year's figure is expected to be revealed at the March 5 opening of the annual Parliament session, though in 2017, it was initially not announced, prompting renewed concerns about transparency.

China plans to set a lower economic growth target of 6 per cent to 6.5 per cent this year, compared with last year's target of around 6.5 per cent, policy sources said.

The government will also announce the economic growth target on March 5. But the defence budget increase could well surpass that.

State-run tabloid Global Times, which takes a strongly nationalistic



China's aircraft carrier Liaoning in a drill in the western Pacific Ocean last year. The country's defence spending is closely watched for clues to its strategic intentions as it develops new military capabilities, including aircraft carriers. PHOTO: REUTERS

line, this month cited an unnamed military expert as saying "a stable 8 to 9 per cent increase from 2018 would be a reasonable prediction".

China still has a long way to go to catch up with Western forces, as the number of advanced weapons now in its arsenal, like the J-20 stealth fighter, remains limited, the paper said.

Mr Xi's speech last month threatening to attack Taiwan should it not accept Chinese rule has shot the issue back up the agenda for the country's military thinkers, especially as the island gears up for

presidential elections next year.

"The Taiwan question can't keep being put off, passed down through the generations," retired Chinese Major-General Luo Yuan, one of the country's most prominent military commentators, wrote on his blog last month. "Our generation must complete our historic mission."

One source with ties to China's military said the armed forces were itching for a fight over self-ruled Taiwan, claimed by China as its territory, especially after Mr Xi's speech.

"Every day, they're like 'fight, fight, fight,'" said the source, who

meets regularly with senior officers.

United States President Donald Trump has backed plans to request US\$750 billion (S\$1.01 trillion) from Congress for defence spending this year. That compares with the 1.11 trillion yuan (S\$223.7 billion) China set for its military budget last year.

China provides no breakdown of its defence budget, leading neighbours and other military powers to complain that its lack of transparency has added to regional tension. China says it is fully transparent and is no threat.

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Greater Bay Area, greater HK-S'pore competition

Rivalry aside, the Republic can still benefit indirectly and from the spillover effect

Claire Huang
Hong Kong Correspondent

The newly announced plan to turn the Greater Bay Area in Southern China into an economic and innovation powerhouse is expected to intensify competition between the economies of the 11 Chinese cities within it and those in Asia.

In particular, it will give Hong Kong's rival, Singapore, a run for its money in the finance and technology sectors, said some observers.

They, however, added that despite intensified competition, Asian economies can also benefit from an affluent Chinese bay area by meeting its need for supplies and services.

But the immediate impact will be more pain than gain because of the collective impact from the inevitable cross-fertilisation and interaction among the cities in the Greater Bay area.

Comprising Hong Kong, Macau and nine cities in Guangdong, the area is a powerful force in battling other economies as its combined population is almost 70 million and gross domestic product is US\$1.58 trillion (S\$2.13 trillion).

The exchanges among the 11 cities will also have spillover effects into parts of the broader region.

Together, the planned network spells tough times for similar but rival cities, Mr Louis Kuijs, head of Asia economics at Oxford Economics, told The Straits Times.

"It's probably going to be challenging for an economy like Singapore that is competing with Hong Kong in the financial area, competing with Shenzhen in technology and other high-end sectors," Mr Kuijs said.

Mr Tommy Xie, head of Greater China research at OCBC Bank, foresees "some immediate challenges" for Singapore as Beijing's support reinforces Hong Kong's role as a global financial centre and offshore renminbi hub.

China unveiled the Greater Bay Area blueprint last week, with Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macau singled out to lead the plan.

The idea is to link up the 11 cities in the Pearl River Delta area to create a single market that is an economic and innovation powerhouse that can rival other bay areas in San Francisco, Tokyo and New York by 2035.

However, observers believe that economies such as the Philippines and Vietnam will not be hit as hard as they would not be going head-on against Shenzhen or Hong Kong.

Being a little lower on the development ladder, these two Asean economies, for instance, are more likely to compete in such areas as attractiveness for manufacturing powered by lower wage costs, Mr Kuijs noted.

But, he added, the Greater Bay Area would bring indirect benefits to the same rivals as it boosts the world's and Asian economic pie.

The first to gain is, of course, Hong Kong, but Singapore stands to benefit as well from the spillover effect, said Mr Xie.

In the near term, Singapore companies can grow their businesses via the Greater Bay Area, he added.

"In the medium term, Singapore can also benefit as the keyword for the initiative is connectivity," said Mr Xie.

"The Greater Bay Area is a good test-bed for broader connectivity between China and South-east Asia. And Singapore can play an important role in facilitating the connection between China and the region."

The diverse industries in the Greater Bay Area also places it in a different segment of the value chain, said Mr Rico Chan, a partner in law firm Baker McKenzie Hong Kong.

In addition, when the bay area becomes more affluent, its businesses will have greater purchasing power, which will, in turn, benefit suppliers in Vietnam and Singapore.

Said Mr Chan: "For the most part, it's not winner takes it all, not one to zero."

"Different people are at different parts of the value segment. For example, Louis Vuitton and Chanel would not regard Zara as their competitor. They exist in different markets."

He added: "If you look at the Zara boss, he's probably richer than the owner of Chanel because of scale. They are different businesses but both are good."

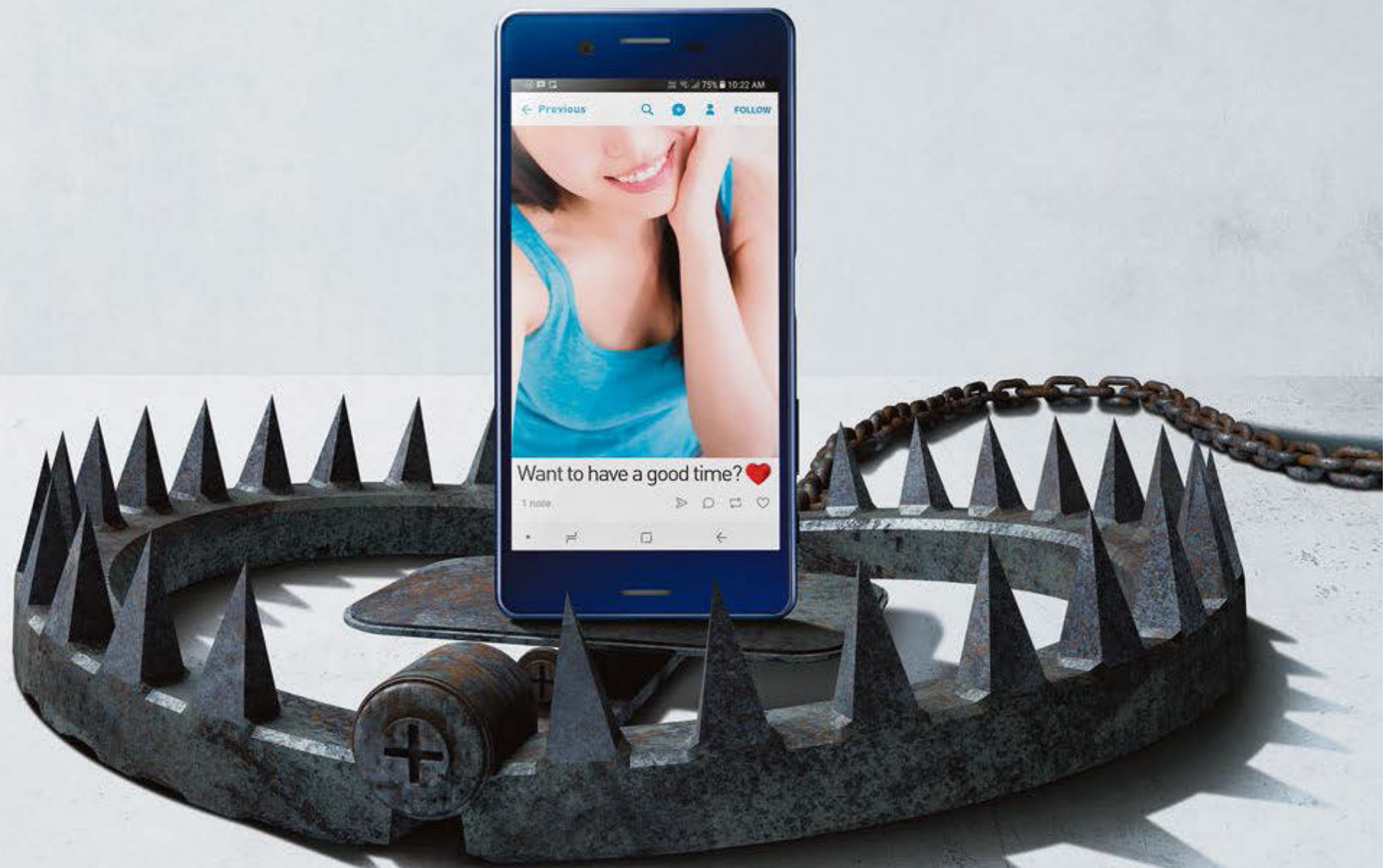
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Hooked to Lombok 'sea worm' festival



At the annual Bau Nyale festival – known locally as the sea worm festival – in Praya, Lombok, in Indonesia's West Nusa Tenggara province, thousands of residents gather at the beach to catch nyale (colourful sea worms) that appear only once a year, the Jakarta Post said. The festival which began on Feb 17 and ended on Monday is held to preserve tradition and attract tourists. Many are drawn to the festival, which included a fashion show, surfing contest and art and cultural performances this year. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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China seen to tighten Internet curbs, target more content

Control of video, news apps to protect Xi Jinping image: Critics

Danson Cheong
China Correspondent
In Beijing

The videos showed rare scenes of chaos in tightly policed China – people running away frantically as explosions went off in the background. The clips looked like the unfolding of a possible terrorist attack, and went viral quickly on Chinese social media.

But as fast as they started spreading, videos of the incident – which took place last month in the northern city of Changchun – were scrubbed by censors from Chinese Internet platforms.

Police later said a mentally unstable individual was responsible for the incident, which left two people dead.

Such instances of censorship are common in China, a country with some of the tightest Internet controls in the world, but academics and activists say they have widened over the last two years.

Much of that censorship has been aimed at protecting the image of President Xi Jinping and controlling discourse within the country.

Censors have targeted video and news apps as well as video games,

ordering content deemed “inappropriate” or “vulgar” to be removed.

China’s Internet regulator, the Cyberspace Administration of China, closed over 6,000 websites last year in a crackdown on “illegal and harmful information”, the state-run Global Times reported last month.

Some of them were in areas that were not politically sensitive, said media scholar Fu King-wa from the University of Hong Kong (HKU), who has observed this trend of widening controls.

“The overarching principle is social stability,” said Associate Professor Fu. “(The Chinese authorities) do not want public discussion on topics that they don’t want discussed. They want people to follow the (Communist) Party, and for state media to frame the discussion on these issues.”

Last week, Wechatoscope – a research project headed by Dr Fu – released a research report on the top topics targeted by the censors on the Wechat messaging platform last year.

The topics were diverse – ranging from the US-China trade war, to the #MeToo movement – with the research report saying the censorship appeared to be aimed at supporting “China’s international political image as a great power”.

Wechatoscope tracked over a million articles on Wechat, one of China’s “superapps” with over a billion users who turn to it for messag-

ing, making payments and getting the news.

Professor Willy Lam from the Chinese University of Hong Kong said that since last year, there has been increasing criticism of Mr Xi from Chinese intellectuals on issues ranging from the removal of term limits for China’s presidency, to the trade war and the perceived failure of Mr Xi to manage relations with the United States.

He added that Chinese leaders were worried that “popular resistance and rebellion” could coalesce online as the economy continues to slow down – so Internet controls would likely tighten.

Ms Wang Yaoli, a China researcher with Human Rights Watch, said Beijing was getting increasingly sensitive when it came to censorship and tightening ideological and moral controls, adding that the crackdown on “vulgar” content was a relatively new development.

“I think the government now not only wants to control political discussions, but also to assert its authority on morals in Chinese society,” she said.

And it is tapping technology to do so. Its latest effort is an app released by the Communist Party’s propaganda department that teaches “Xi Jinping Thought” – as Mr Xi’s political philosophy is called – which has become the most downloaded item on China’s Apple app store.



A photograph of President Xi Jinping seen on a propaganda billboard in China’s northern Hebei province. A propaganda app that teaches “Xi Jinping Thought” – as Mr Xi’s political philosophy is called – has become the most downloaded item on China’s Apple app store. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Released last month, it was reportedly developed by tech giant Alibaba.

Called Xuexi Qiangguo or “Study strong nation”, the name of the app is a play on words, and could also be translated as “Study Xi Jinping to make the nation strong”.

It is reportedly compulsory for the Communist Party’s more than 90 million members to download and use the app daily.

The app tracks each user’s engagement, giving them points for logging in, reading news articles, watching videos, and even taking quizzes.

The points they get are in turn tracked by their employers, some of whom have set targets for employees to attain daily.

Prof Lam said the app was a bid to “clean up the minds of the people and return to Maoist values”.

Mr David Bandurski, co-director of HKU’s China media project, went further, likening the app to the “Little Red Book” of the Mao Zedong era, the collection of statements and speeches by China’s founding leader that was widely distributed during the Cultural Revolution.

“The book has been revolutionised. It now interacts with you, and takes the measure of you. It can determine just how ‘smart’ you are when it comes to your devotion and your grasp of the ideological essentials,” he said in a post.

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‘Gold standard’ evidence of man-made global warming

OSLO • Evidence for man-made global warming has reached a “gold standard” level of certainty, adding to pressure for cuts in greenhouse gases to limit rising temperatures, scientists said.

“Humanity cannot afford to ignore such clear signals,” the US-led team wrote in the journal Nature Climate Change, referring to satellite measurements of rising temperatures over the past 40 years.

They said confidence that human activities were raising the heat at the Earth’s surface had reached a “five-sigma” level, a statistical gauge meaning there is only a one-in-a-million chance that the signal would appear if there was no warming.

Such a “gold standard” was applied in 2012, for instance, to confirm the discovery of the Higgs boson subatomic particle, a basic building block of the universe.

Dr Benjamin Santer of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, and lead author of the study out on Monday, said he hoped the findings would win over sceptics and spur action.

“The narrative out there that scientists don’t know the cause of climate change is wrong,” he told Reuters. “We do.”

Mainstream scientists say the burning of fossil fuels is causing more floods, droughts, heat waves and rising sea levels.

US President Donald Trump, who has often cast doubt on global warming, plans to pull out of the 197-nation Paris climate agreement which seeks to end the fossil fuel era this century by shifting to cleaner energies such as wind and solar power.

Sixty-two per cent of Americans polled last year believed that climate change has a human cause, up from 47 per cent in 2013, according to the Yale Programme on Climate Change Communication.

Monday’s findings, by researchers in the United States, Canada and Scotland, said evidence for global warming reached the five sigma level by 2005 in two of three sets of satellite data widely used by researchers, and in 2016 in the third.

Professor John Christy of the University of Alabama in Huntsville, which runs the third set of data, said there were still many gaps in understanding climate change.

His data shows a slower pace of warming than the other two sets. “You may see a certain fingerprint that indicates human influence, but that the actual intensity of the influence is minor (as our satellite data indicate),” he told Reuters.

Separately, in 2013, the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded it is “extremely likely”, or at least 95 per cent probable, that human activities have been the main cause of climate change since the 1950s.

Dr Peter Stott of the British Met Office, who was among the scientists drawing that conclusion and was not involved in Monday’s study, said he would favour raising the probability one notch to “virtually certain”, or 99 per cent to 100 per cent. “The alternative explanation of natural factors dominating has got even less likely,” he said.

The last four years have been the hottest since records began in the 19th century. The IPCC will next publish a formal assessment of the probabilities in 2021.

“I would be reluctant to raise to 99-100 per cent, but there is no doubt there is more evidence of change in the global signals over a wider suite of ocean indices and atmospheric indices,” said Professor Nathan Bindoff, a climate scientist at the University of Tasmania.

REUTERS

S. Korea’s Black Eagles soar ahead of centennial event



South Korea Air Force’s Black Eagles aerobatic team flying over central Seoul during a rehearsal on Monday for the 100th anniversary of the March 1 independence movement against Japanese colonial rule. On March 1, 1919, thousands of Koreans flocked to the streets to proclaim Korea’s independence from Japan’s colonial rule, which lasted from 1910 to 1945. Scholars see the movement as a rare event in Korea’s modern history that can be jointly celebrated by the entire Korean Peninsula. The nationwide, peaceful mass movement hearkens back to a time when the peninsula was not yet divided. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

WorldBriefs

Fast Internet service for disputed isles

MOSCOW • Russia has established high-speed Internet service on a chain of Pacific islands off its far eastern coast, state-run telecoms operator Rostelecom said yesterday, despite a decades-old dispute with Japan over the territory.

Rostelecom said an 815km fibre optic cable line had been laid between Russia’s offshore Sakhalin island and the island chain to introduce fast Internet connection in four towns and villages on the islands of Iturup, Kunashir and Shikotan.

REUTERS

Chinese county halts shale gas mining

SHANGHAI • A county in Sichuan province in south-western China has halted shale gas mining amid fears it may have helped cause a magnitude 4.9 quake in the area that killed two people on Monday, state news agency Xinhua reported.

PetroChina, which operates in the area, said in an e-mail to Reuters that “due to safety reasons and production safety requirements, the shale gas development enterprises have suspended their operations upon communication with PetroChina Southwest Oil and Gas Field Branch.”

REUTERS

Thai PM will not join election debate

BANGKOK • Thai Prime Minister and junta leader Prayut Chan-o-cha said yesterday he will not join a public debate with his fellow prime ministerial candidates ahead of the March 24 general election.

“I’m not afraid. I just don’t think it’s necessary,” Mr Prayut, 64, told a press briefing at Government House. DPA

UN brings food aid to Yemen front lines

GENEVA • The United Nations said yesterday it had reached food-aid warehouses on the front lines in Yemen, holding enough supplies to feed millions of people, for the first time since September.

The mission follows an agreement struck in Sweden on Feb 17, in which the sides in Yemen’s conflicts agreed to redeploy their fighters outside the ports, which are in the rebel Houthi-held west, and away from areas that are key to the humanitarian relief effort in the country.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

US feeling threatened by China's advances in Israel

Washington fears its interests in Middle East at risk as Beijing invests more in Israel

Gil Yaron
For The Straits Times
In Tel Aviv

Israel is in danger of being caught up in a new Cold War.

It may be the most important ally for the United States in the Middle East, but China's footprint is growing as Washington turns its back on the region. China has become one of the major importers of Saudi, Iranian and Iraqi oil. Trade between Beijing and the Arab states rose to US\$200 billion (\$270 billion) in 2017. China is deepening its ties with Iran, with trade between them hitting US\$37 billion in 2017, up 19 per cent over the previous year.

But nowhere is Beijing's rapid advance more conspicuous than in Israel, where China could soon overtake the US as the main foreign investor. Washington being relegated to second place here would not augur well for its interests in the entire region. Some Israelis consider this a threat to national security.

In January, head of domestic intelligence Nadav Argaman described Beijing's investments in "strategic infrastructure and larger companies" as "dangerous" because they were "not adequately supervised".

Former Mossad chef Efraim Halevy warned that "if the Americans and Europeans fear that Israel is developing into a place in which China can gain access to its business and scientific secrets, Israel's achievements of recent decades will face an existential threat".

These assessments reflect Wash-



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang welcoming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Beijing in 2017. The two countries are now growing closer and China has become the second most important trading partner for Israel after the US.

PHOTO: EPA-EFE

ington's mounting displeasure over Israel's blossoming friendship with China. Companies with close contacts to Beijing may lose their US partners, warned former US ambassador to Israel Daniel Shapiro. Deputy US Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette threatened to suspend any exchange of information should Israel fail to scrutinise Chinese investments more rigorously.

On his last visit to Israel, US national security adviser John Bolton urged his interlocutors to re-evaluate their relationship with Chinese communications giants such as ZTE and Huawei.

And the US Sixth Fleet, which of-

ten docks in Haifa Harbour, warned that it could halt all visits because the Shanghai International Port Group was given the contract to expand Haifa's harbour and will operate it beginning in 2021.

The cooperation between Israel and China, however, is still small compared to other countries.

In 2017, Saudi Arabia and China signed bilateral deals worth US\$65 billion. In Oman, Chinese investments are turning the fishing village of Duqm into an industrial hub. China is building the business district of Egypt's new capital. Chinese warships have docked at all the Gulf states' ports, visited Egypt and held

a military exercise with Iran's navy in the Strait of Hormuz.

Nevertheless, the close cooperation between Israel and China stands out. Just a decade ago, dealings were a trifle. While Israel was the first state in the Middle East to formally recognise China, the most populous country in the world remained suspicious of the Jewish state. Full diplomatic relations were established only in 1992. In global forums, Beijing continues to vote against Israel's interests.

But now China and Israel are growing closer. During a state visit to China in 2017, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed it as a

"marriage arranged in heaven". A report by the US Congress has said that the Jewish state is now one of China's main arms suppliers. In the first eight months of last year, Israeli exports to China reached US\$3.5 billion while imports increased by 10 per cent to US\$4.9 billion. Trade between the two sides has grown by more than 60 per cent annually.

China has become the second most important trading partner for Israel after the US. Chinese investment in Israeli high-tech firms tripled between 2013 and 2017, reaching US\$25 billion. China may overtake the US as the largest

source of foreign direct investment. Over 1,000 Israeli start-ups have set up branches in China, while Chinese firms such as Huawei, Legend and Xiaomi have research centres in Israel. China was awarded the contract to expand Haifa Harbour in 2015 and is building Tel Aviv's new subway.

These numbers have some people thinking that Israel already is firmly in the grip of the Chinese.

But Dr Galia Lavie, a researcher in Chinese studies at the Tel Aviv Institute for Strategic Studies, disagrees, believing that China's clout in Israel is still modest. However, Washington still frets about Beijing's growing influence, she told The Straits Times in a phone interview. The fear is that even the appearance of the US losing influence, especially in Israel, could help tilt the balance of power in the region in favour of China.

Another concern is technology transfer. "The US fears that its know-how will be passed on to its major global competitors, and that they will one day face Chinese companies or military leaders using American technology," said Dr Lavie. Washington could retaliate. "What will we do if the US no longer protects us in the UN with its veto?" Israel should be more circumspect, also out of its own interests. "Our prosperity stems from our innovative strength. If we sell our best companies, how do we maintain our status as the world's start-up nation?" asked Dr Lavie.

Diplomatic sources said Mr Netanyahu has begun to worry about China's new role. The authorities have blocked the sale of two Israeli insurance companies to Chinese investors. Tenders for the construction of a new airport have been restricted to Nato states only. And Israel has promised to set up a new agency with US help to monitor investments and the transfer of civilian technology.

"We know US support is the cornerstone of our survival," said Israel's former ambassador to China Matan Vilnai. "In Asia, a cold war is raging between China and the US, we must not get sucked into this."

So while China and Israel are growing closer, Chinese advances in the Middle East seem to have brought Israel and the US closer together as well – at least for the time being.

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TIME	25 FEB 2019 (Monday)	26 FEB 2019 (Tuesday)	27 FEB 2019 (Wednesday)
11.00pm to 12.00pm		NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd
12.00pm to 1.00pm	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Care for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Care for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Care for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness
1.00pm to 2.00pm	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	DR. HOU & LING Double Extracts Diamond White Essence by Jing Rui Biotechnology - Cai En International Ltd
2.00pm to 3.00pm	The Most Advanced Reproduction Beauty in Japan by Beauty Planning Inc.	TOKI SKIN: The Japanese Way to Naturally Beautiful, Porcelain Skin by Lit Botanica Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd
3.00pm to 4.00pm	Miraculous Non Surgical Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	DR. HOU & LING LIPOFORM Bust Plus Lotion by Jing Rui Biotechnology - Cai En International Ltd	Your Skills Your Future: Latest Government Subsidy Beauty Courses 2019 by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd
4.00pm to 5.00pm	NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd	The Myth of Japanese Cosmetics, 'NAHLS' by Deep Impact Co., Ltd.	NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd
5.00pm to 6.00pm	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Miraculous Non Surgical Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	Self-Defence Power - Our Body's Inherent Ability to Heal by Nature Produce
6.00pm to 7.00pm	Self-Defence Power - Our Body's Inherent Ability to Heal by Nature Produce	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME			
TIME	25 FEB 2019 (Monday)	26 FEB 2019 (Tuesday)	27 FEB 2019 (Wednesday)
11.30pm to 12.30pm	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd		
12.30pm to 1.30pm	7 Minutes Miracle Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	7 Minutes Miracle Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	
1.30pm to 2.30pm	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd
2.30pm to 3.30pm	The Best Body Contouring Tech of Both Worlds: NobleShape with LLD+AMF+RF by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd	Add a Whole New Dimension to your AGASSI - The Latest RF Smile Lifting & Vaginal Tightening Concept! by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd	Bio-Jet - The Next Generation of Needle-Free Transdermal Drug Delivery Concept by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd
3.30pm to 4.30pm	2 Weeks to Brighter, Even and Younger Looking Skin with the Power of Po3™. The Light Serum by 28Cubed by NamZ Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd
4.30pm to 5.30pm		5 Most Effective Meridian Point for Natural Face Lifting by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd	5 Most Effective Meridian Point for Natural Face Lifting by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd

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News analysis

Mayday as British lawmakers debate Brexit yet again

Whichever way the votes in Parliament go, the British PM's days in office are numbered



Jonathan Eyal

Global Correspondent
In London

Even by the unusual circumstances of Brexit – as the process of Britain's separation from the European Union is now universally known – the battles expected in the British Parliament today will be extraordinary.

For legislators in London will face three existential questions: either extend the Brexit negotiations (something which Prime Minister Theresa May spent years pledging would never happen); leave Europe with no deal at all; or opt to hold a referendum to ask the people of Britain whether they really are serious about leaving the EU.

And if this was not complicated enough, neither Mrs May's ruling Conservative Party, nor the main opposition Labour Party, is in control of its own MPs, so the outcome of today's votes remains as utterly unpredictable as the country's immediate future.

Under plans agreed between the two parties, the House of Commons was supposed to be asked today to vote on a new British government-negotiated plan to leave the EU.

The old plan, which Prime Minister May concluded with EU officials last November, was overwhelmingly rejected by Parliament because it gave Ireland a right of veto over arrangements about the border between Northern Ireland, which is part of

the United Kingdom, and the Irish Republic. Mrs May promised to redress it, and replace the old proposals with a "Plan B".

But Prime Minister May has no new proposals, so instead, she opted for a risky strategy of threatening that, in the absence of no compromise, Britain may simply crash out of the EU with no arrangements, as it would do on March 29, according to existing treaty arrangements.

Mrs May's calculation was that either MPs in London would be scared enough by the prospect of leaving in a chaotic manner that they'd drop their opposition and sign up to her initial Brexit deal, or that EU officials would become equally fearful of such risks and give in to British demands.

Neither has happened. Prime Minister May saw her demands rebuffed this week when she tried to negotiate with EU leaders in Egypt for an Africa-Europe summit, and faced a determined EU president Donald Tusk, who suggested that, "given the situation we are in", an extension of the Brexit negotiations "would be a rational solution".

In an equally momentous shift, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn announced that he will back a new referendum on whether Britain should leave the EU. Until this week, Mr Corbyn, whose instincts are anti-European, steadfastly refused to consider such an option. But faced with the defection of nine of his MPs and the threat of further rebellions, he gave in.

In theory, both developments

should calm tempers; giving more time for negotiations and asking the people of Britain whether they wish to stop a process which has dominated their lives for the past three years offer to take the sting out of the current debate. In practice, however, the moves merely complicate British politics.

Mrs May must know that, although Parliament will be asked to authorise leaving the EU with no deal whatsoever, few would consider this option which risks wreaking havoc with the British economy. So, barring any last-minute surprise, the alternative is to renegotiate a new deal with the EU, and that will take time.

Ardent Brexit believers will be furious with the Prime Minister's admission that a delay in Brexit is now possible, fearing that a postponement of the exit date would merely mean that the separation never takes place.

And their fears could be heightened by the way other EU leaders will react to any demand to delay the Brexit date. For although Mrs May is talking of a "short" extension to negotiations, European governments – whose unanimous consent must be obtained – have no interest in giving her an extension of just a few months, only to then see the British Prime Minister coming back to ask for more time.

An emerging consensus in Brussels is that an extension, if granted, should be for a longer period of time of, say, two years. But the longer the extension is, the bigger the trouble for Mrs May with her Brexit supporters.

Meanwhile, Labour's offer to hold another referendum cannot pass either, unless a substantial number of the government's own MPs vote for it, since even if Labour joins hands with smaller parties in Parliament, it cannot muster the required majority for such a move.

Literally nobody knows how the votes in the British Parliament will go. But a view is beginning to be formed that, whichever way the debate goes, Prime Minister May's days in office are numbered, largely because events are now slipping from her control.

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British PM Theresa May and European Council president Donald Tusk meeting on Sunday on the sidelines of an EU-Arab summit in Egypt. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

EU may accept May's proposal of a short Brexit delay, say officials

BRUSSELS • Two European Union officials have offered early positive reaction to British Prime Minister Theresa May's suggestion yesterday of a possible short delay to Britain's departure from the bloc on March 29.

"If a request for a delay of the Brexit date is submitted, it would be considered favourably," a senior EU official said yesterday. "We have not seen a request but an extension of a couple of months would be relatively straightforward."

Another EU official said it was "good to see rational arguments being heard" in Britain, after the bloc's leaders told Mrs May that an extension of the time limit to negotiate Britain's divorce was the only way forward through the impasse.

Mrs May promised yesterday to allow Parliament to delay Brexit by up to three months so that Britain would not crash out of the EU on March 29 without a deal.

Opening up the possibility of taking a no-deal off the table marks one of the biggest turning points in the United Kingdom's labyrinthine Brexit crisis since the shock 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU.

The dramatic reversal in Mrs May's steadfast Brexit strategy came after threats of mass resigna-

tions from her own ministers and calls for a second referendum on Britain's EU membership from the main opposition Labour Party, as the country remains as divided as ever over Brexit.

European Council president Donald Tusk said on Monday he had discussed the "legal and procedural context of a potential extension" when he met Mrs May a day earlier on the sidelines of an EU-Arab summit in Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh.

"I believe in the situation we are in, an extension would be a rational solution but Prime Minister May still believes she's able to avoid this scenario," Mr Tusk told a closing summit press conference.

The EU has been watching with growing alarm the possibility that Britain will crash out of the bloc without a deal, risking chaos on both sides of the Channel.

The Labour Party had raised the pressure on Monday, saying it would put forward its own plan for Brexit, which calls for Britain to stay in the EU customs union. It said if its plan was rejected, it would lend its support to an amendment on holding a second referendum on EU membership – without specifying a date.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Top pope aide Cardinal Pell convicted of child sex crimes

MELBOURNE • Australian Cardinal George Pell, one of Pope Francis' closest advisers, has been found guilty of sexually assaulting two choirboys, becoming the most senior Catholic cleric ever convicted of child sex crimes.

An Australian jury unanimously found Pell guilty in December on one count of sexual abuse and four counts of indecent assault against two boys at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne in the 1990s.

Pell, now aged 77, was accused of cornering the boys – then aged 12 and 13 – in the cathedral's sacristy following Sunday mass and forcing them to perform a sex act on him.

The cleric, who has remained free on bail, denied all the charges and an initial trial ended with a hung jury in September, but he was convicted on retrial on Dec 11.

A wide-ranging suppression order from the presiding judge had prevented the media from reporting even the existence of court proceedings and the ensuing trials since May.

The order was lifted during a court hearing yesterday when prosecutors decided against proceeding with a second trial for separate allegations against Pell dating from the 1970s.

Pell maintained his innocence yesterday. "Cardinal George Pell has always maintained his innocence and continues to do so," said a statement issued by his lawyers, who added that they had lodged an appeal.

The Vatican yesterday confirmed that a ban on Pell exercising public ministry and having any contact with children still stands, on the order of Pope Francis.

A Vatican statement said: "It is painful news that, we are well aware, has shocked many people, not just in Australia. As we await the definitive verdict, we join the Australian bishops in praying for all victims of abuse, reaffirming our commitment to do everything possible so that the Church is a safe home for everyone, especially for children."

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he was "deeply shocked" by Pell's conviction and that the justice system had shown "no Australian is above the law".

Of the two choirboys that Pell was found to have assaulted, one died in 2014 of a drug overdose that his family blamed on the trauma he suffered.



Cardinal George Pell (centre) arriving at the Victorian County Court in Melbourne yesterday. One of Pope Francis' closest advisers, Pell, 77, has been found guilty of sexually assaulting two choirboys, becoming the most senior Catholic cleric ever convicted of child sex crimes. Pell was convicted on retrial on Dec 11, but a suppression order had prevented the media from reporting it. PHOTO: DPA

The second victim said in a statement issued by his lawyer yesterday that the ongoing legal process was stressful and "not over yet".

"Like many survivors I have experienced shame, loneliness, depression and struggle. Like many survivors it has taken me years to understand the impact upon my life," said the man, who has not been publicly identified.

Outside the County Court of Victoria, supporters of other abuse survivors yelled "monster" and "rot in hell" as Pell got into a car after the

hearing. A pre-sentencing hearing is scheduled for today, when Pell is expected to be remanded in custody. He faces a maximum 25 years in prison if his appeal is rejected, prosecutors have said.

His conviction is another hammer blow to the Church, which has struggled to convince the world it is serious about tackling widespread child abuse and paedophilia.

Pell was appointed by Pope Francis to manage the Vatican finances in 2014 and was one of the pontiff's

closest advisers until his Dec 11 conviction.

On Sunday, the pope closed a historic Vatican summit on sexual abuse by priests by likening the abuse to "human sacrifice".

But critics say the institution is still moving too slowly in dealing with a problem that is global in scale.

The case has caused consternation in Australia, where Pell was a leading conservative voice on issues ranging from gay marriage to climate change. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

PAINFUL NEWS

It is painful news that, we are well aware, has shocked many people, not just in Australia.



A VATICAN STATEMENT

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The Straits Times says

A Sino-US deal to foster better ties?

The decision by United States President Donald Trump to delay the increase in tariffs on US\$200 billion (S\$270 billion) worth of Chinese goods in anticipation of a trade deal is a positive development and brought relief to jittery markets. But the scope and durability of any agreement between the US and China are open to question. The tariff increase, from 10 per cent to 25 per cent, was supposed to take effect from March 1. But Mr Trump postponed the hike to an as-yet-unspecified date, indicating that meanwhile, there is a “good chance” of a trade deal which he hopes to formally sign with China’s President Xi Jinping by the end of next month. The easing of China-US trade tensions has been welcomed by US business groups

and has propelled Chinese stocks higher. But from what is known at this stage, the deal is limited. One of its highlights is a pledge by Beijing not to artificially weaken the value of the yuan as well as to step up Chinese purchases of US agricultural and energy products – both of which will help reduce China’s bilateral trade deficit with the US, which crossed US\$380 billion last year. China has also drafted a new foreign investment law that bans foreign technology transfers – which US and other foreign companies operating in China have long complained about. However, several key issues that have been at the core of US objections to China’s trade policies remain unaddressed, including subsidies to China’s state-owned enter-

prises, policies that grant more favourable market access to local companies and issues relating to cyber security and the alleged cybertheft of industrial secrets by Chinese entities. Mechanisms to enforce the provisions of the agreement are also not yet in place. Thus, the evidence suggests that the trade deal that is reportedly to be signed next month is more likely to resemble a memorandum of understanding – whether Mr Trump likes the description or not – on selected issues than a substantive agreement. Securing the political buy-in needed to make the deal credible and durable will also be a problem for Mr Trump. Many Democrats, who control the US House of Representatives and who are just

as hawkish on China’s trade practices as the Trump administration, would not support a trade agreement which is perceived to let China get off lightly. They may also suspect that Mr Trump is eager to get a trade deal done to burnish his credentials as a dealmaker in the run-up to the US election season, which is getting under way. Related to this are concerns that Mr Trump is playing a tactical game, trying to obtain Chinese support for his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Many Republicans, including Mr Trump’s own trade advisers, have indicated that they want to see a comprehensive trade deal. Thus, while a deal may well be on the cards, it will likely be partial and patchy, leaving many issues outstanding.

Economic Affairs

High taxes on the super-rich are back in vogue

A tax counter-revolution may be under way



Vikram Khanna

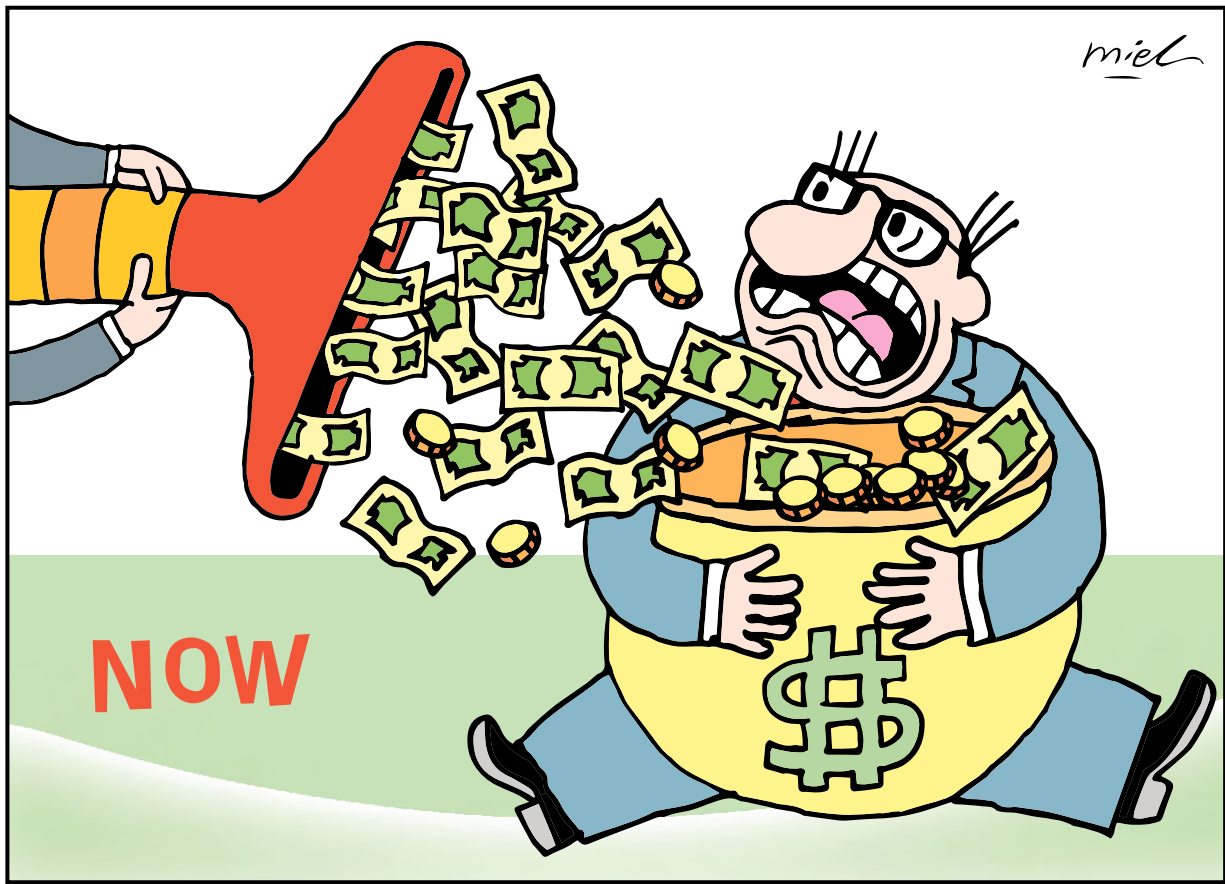
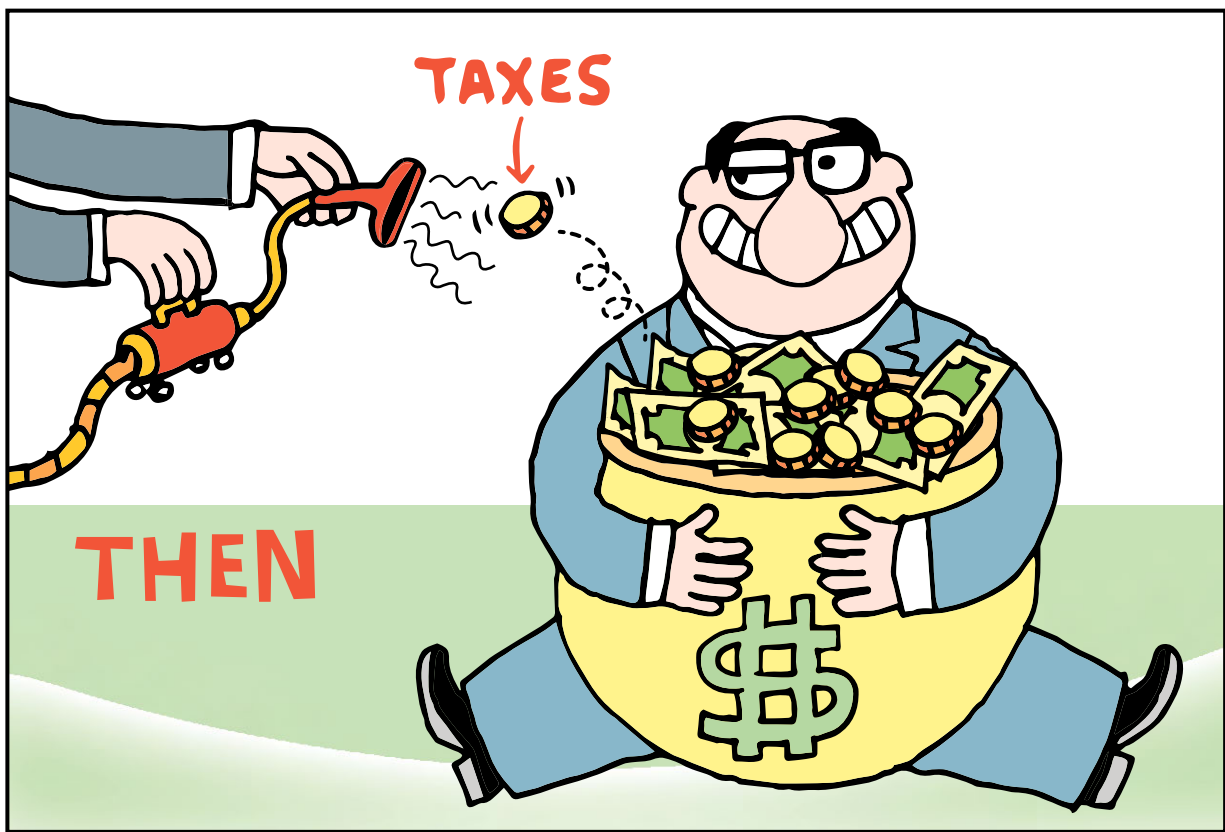
Associate Editor

Could a new tax revolution be on the cards that will end the long era of low taxes for the super-rich? We don’t know yet, but in the United States, the battle lines are being drawn. The newly elected US Congressman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez made headlines recently when she proposed a top marginal tax rate of 70 per cent on incomes of US\$10 million (S\$13.5 million) or more. The left-of-centre US politician and presidential candidate, Senator Elizabeth Warren, proposes a 2 per cent “ultramillionaire wealth tax” on people with a net worth of US\$50 million and an additional 1 per cent on those worth more than US\$1 billion. This tax would be levied on the combined value of all assets, including financial assets and real estate held both within and outside the US. Another presidential contender, Senator Bernie Sanders, has also vowed to soak the billionaire class through higher taxes at the top on incomes and capital gains, as well as estate duties. Ten years ago, any mainstream US politician who dared to make such tax proposals (and none did) would likely have been jeered off the stage. Even economists who proposed them were considered too radical to be taken seriously. Nobody wanted to hear about high taxes, which were associated with the era of stagflation (high inflation combined with high unemployment) that prevailed in the 1970s.

REAGAN-THATCHER REVOLUTION
In the 1980s came a tax revolution. Then US President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who were both elected around the same time, persuaded their electorates that the road to economic salvation was paved with low tax rates. Combined with deregulation and

what Mr Reagan described as “the magic of the marketplace”, low taxes would encourage people – especially the rich – to work harder, invest and create more wealth. The supply side of the economy would take off and the benefits would trickle down to everybody, including the poor. This seductive storyline was enthusiastically embraced by the US Republican Party, where it remains the ruling credo even today. The allure of low tax regimes spread to other countries. In 1981, the top personal income tax in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was 65.7 per cent. By 1990, it was 50.7 per cent, falling to 45.8 per cent in 2010. Average corporate income tax rates also declined by more than 20 percentage points since 1981. Singapore, too, followed the trend. Up to the 1980s, the highest marginal tax rate was 55 per cent, but was later brought in line with the corporate tax rate of 40 per cent. In response to the recession of 1985/86, both corporate and personal taxes were cut to 33 per cent in 1987. Both rates continued to be reduced, to 30 per cent by 1992 and then further in the next decade. Today, the corporate tax rate stands at 17 per cent and the top personal income tax rate at 22 per cent. The latter was raised from 20 per cent from YA 2017, which suggests that it might have bottomed out.

INEQUALITY AND RENT SEEKING
Almost everywhere, tax cuts were accompanied by huge increases in pre-tax inequality. Economists Emmanuel Saez and Thomas Piketty found a strong correlation between reductions in top tax rates and the increases in the pre-tax income share of the richest 1 per cent for the periods 1975 to 1979 and 2004 to 2008, across 18 OECD countries for which such data was available. In the US, the top rate went down 35 percentage points and the income share of the richest 1 per cent went up a hefty 10 percentage points. Mr Chuck Collins and Mr Josh Hoxie of the Washington-based Institute of Policy Studies reported in their October 2018 study Billionaire Bonanza 2018 that America’s three richest billionaires



– Mr Jeff Bezos, Mr Bill Gates and Mr Warren Buffett – have about as much wealth as the bottom half of the US population combined. In sharp contrast, in France and Germany, top tax rates were little changed in the 30 years to 2018, and the share of their richest one per cent also remained largely unchanged. Dr Saez and Dr Piketty (among other researchers) found that the main mechanism through which low tax rates led to high pre-tax inequality was by encouraging “rent-seeking” behaviour among highly-paid executives. Compensation derived from rent seeking refers to that part of pay that is over and above the amount justified by productivity or shareholder returns. The Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz described rent seekers as “people who have been successful in getting a larger share of the pie rather than increasing the size of the pie”. The rise of rent-seeking behaviour is reflected in how executive compensation has changed since the 1970s, when taxes were high.

In 1978, the average chief executive in the US was paid about 30 times as much as the average worker. In 2017, when taxes were much lower, the average CEO of companies in the S&P 500 index earned 361 times as much, according to the US trade union AFL-CIO’s Executive Paywatch, which tracks CEO pay. This means that those CEOs earned more in a single working day than their average employees earned in an entire year. This glaring gulf has understandably raised questions. Besides, the idea that CEOs in 2017 were more than 10 times more productive (compared with their workers) than in 1978 beggars belief. Studies have shown that rent seeking has been particularly egregious in the financial sector, which paid out huge rewards for risk-taking from the 1980s onwards while enjoying the implicit guarantee of taxpayer-funded bailouts; these were indeed provided after the global financial crisis of 2008, when those risks turned out to be catastrophic. The high compensation of executives in the US corporate

world spread to other countries, although not to the extent that prevailed in America. It was also duplicated in the non-profit world, where the heads of universities, public hospitals and even charities were paid lavishly, because they benchmarked their pay to the corporate sector. Some professionals have also succeeded in extracting high rents – notably, doctors and lawyers, who, thanks to high entry barriers in their professions, face limited international competition. There is scant evidence that high pay led to top executives either working harder or producing better results. Indeed, it is not uncommon for CEOs to be paid handsomely and receive bonuses and golden parachutes even when their companies make losses or fail. Low taxes also did not lead to higher economic growth. From the 1930s to the 1980s, the US was a “high tax” country – the top marginal rate was 78 per cent on average. But both gross domestic product and productivity growth were higher than in the post-1980 era of low taxes.

Nor have low tax rates fuelled high growth elsewhere. An extreme example is Russia, which introduced a flat tax rate of 13 per cent in 2001. Instead of high growth, this produced the most unequal economy in the world, dominated by oligarchs, in which about 45 per cent of incomes accrue to the richest 10 per cent. To a large extent, the calls for a return to high top marginal income tax rates that we now see in the US are a backlash against the rise of inequality since the 1980s, which culminated in the global financial crisis. The rise of incomes at the top is only one part of the story. The other part is that wages of average workers have hardly budged. A study by the Pew Research Centre last August based on data from the US Bureau of Labour Statistics found that average US hourly wages in real terms (adjusted for inflation) were about the same last year as they were in 1964.

NEW NARRATIVE AND PUSHBACK
The fact that serious US presidential candidates are openly calling for a return to high top marginal tax rates – which has never happened since the 1970s – suggests that at least in the United States and Britain, where the Labour Party has called for a 50 per cent top tax rate, the message has found a receptive audience. A tax counter-revolution may be under way to overturn the 40-year narrative that low taxes are better for society. People have taken this narrative for granted – most have never witnessed high top income tax rates in their working lives – that economic commentators are reminding them that the call for higher tax rates is not some offbeat idea, but has long been part of mainstream economic thinking, all the way from the 1930s to the 1980s. Conservative economists have started to push back, highlighting the downsides of high tax rates. They point out that avoidance and evasion will rise; that a lot of their incomes accrue in the form of realised capital gains, so they will simply realise them less frequently; and that high tax rates will discourage people from acquiring advanced skills or starting businesses. They also suggest that there are better ways to deal with inequality: invest more in education and skills to help low-wage workers switch to higher-paid jobs, reform corporate governance to curb excessive executive pay, and regulate patent laws to prevent owners of intellectual property from extracting excessive rents. But the proponents of higher tax rates, such as Dr Piketty and Dr Saez point out that the evidence shows that while other measures may be useful, raising tax rates on income and wealth are by far the most potent tools to deal with inequality. As we enter the US election season, the debate will intensify. A battle over taxes and a rewriting of the social contract could be a dominant theme. And if the Democrats win the US presidency next year, there is a good chance that the era of low income taxes for the super-rich will be over, starting a trend that could, once again, spread across the world. The big question then will be how far taxes will be raised.

Trump’s China trade ‘win’ will cost the US

Michael Schuman

President Donald Trump believes he is about to score yet another big win on trade, this time with China.

Progress in talks with Beijing, he claims, has been so “substantial” that he has delayed a looming March 1 deadline and is likely headed for a summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping to finalise a long-awaited settlement.

This latest “win”, however, is shaping up to be a typical Trump victory – much, much more smoke than fire.

And the potential consequences could be costly: long-term damage to US credibility with China and, more broadly, within the entire global economic order.

So far, Mr Trump’s negotiators appear to have made headway on large-scale Chinese purchases of American goods to narrow the trade deficit, some market-opening measures for US companies, a pledge not to manipulate the yuan and perhaps better protection for US intellectual property.

The progress, though, has come

in areas that either mean little to China, such as reducing the trade deficit, or are already in line with overall Chinese policy, as in improving intellectual property rights.

The Chinese delegation so far appears to have deftly dodged concessions that would force fundamental changes in Beijing’s core policy agenda and state-led economic system.

Of course, talks are still ongoing, so further breakthroughs are possible. But, as President Trump seems more and more intent on sealing a deal, they are increasingly unlikely.

That means the China trade agreement will, in all likelihood, follow an all-too-familiar pattern: Mr Trump talks big but settles for little.

Last year, he sold a revised free-trade agreement with South Korea as “brand new” when the changes were cosmetic. Beyond a couple of meaningless tweaks on automobile trade, Mr Trump managed to blackmail Seoul into imposing a quota on steel exports to the US.

The revisions in the replacement

for the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) are more substantive, especially in automobile, dairy and digital trade.

But the revised pact, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, is hardly a game changer. As resident scholar Claude Barfield at the American Enterprise Institute has explained, there are “large sections of the old Nafta that were not touched” in the update, and the new deal “won’t really be affecting trade flows”.

The petty way Mr Trump dealt with allies South Korea, Canada and Mexico in trade negotiations was bad enough for Washington’s reputation. The fallout from the China deal could be much more severe.

First off, Mr Trump’s strategy of speaking loudly and carrying a small stick will only make it harder to negotiate with China in the future.

His climbdown will reinforce the perception among Chinese leaders that they can outlast elected American politicians – no matter how combative they appear – who will eventually wither under short-term political pressures.

That means the next time Washington complains about Chinese trade practices – which is inevitable, given the likely incomplete nature of the current deal – Beijing will be even more resistant to making major concessions.

More importantly, Mr Trump is, in certain respects, prodding Chinese economic policy in the exact wrong direction.

Clearly, those big purchases of US agricultural produce, energy and other products pledged by Beijing can happen only if organised by the Chinese state. That puts Washington in the awkward position of demanding Chinese bureaucrats overrule markets and twist trade flows on behalf of the US.

What American companies really want is to get the Chinese state out of the way – to allow market forces and private enterprise greater sway in the Chinese economy. Only then will China become a more open and

fair place to do business. So the ultimate price for these extra soya bean sales is rather steep: core American economic principles.

Ever since the end of World War II, the US has taken the lead in forming an international order based on free enterprise, open markets and peaceful integration. Mr Trump, too, has claimed his policies are meant to create “fair” trade by blasting away at remaining barriers.

But the China deal is exposing his willingness to sacrifice longstanding American ideals for short-term political gain. Mr Trump could make matters even worse if he interferes in the case brought by the US Justice Department against Huawei Technologies’ chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou, as he has suggested is possible, to ink a trade deal. That would undermine the standing of the US legal system around the world.

Even if he doesn’t go that far, though, Mr Trump is weakening Washington’s ability to influence the global economic order by whittling away at both US leverage and authority. And be assured the world is watching.

As Mr Trump looks set to dive into another trade war – this time with Europe and Japan over automobiles – their policymakers are well aware of the gap between his stated goals and actual outcomes.

Mr Trump’s quest for big “wins” on trade threatens to leave the US a bigger loser. BLOOMBERG

• Michael Schuman, who is based in Beijing, is the author of *The Miracle: The Epic Story Of Asia’s Quest For Wealth and Confucius: And The World He Created*.

The petty way US President Donald Trump dealt with allies South Korea, Canada and Mexico in trade negotiations was bad enough for Washington’s reputation. The fallout from the China deal could be much more severe.

The Oscars and the illusion of perfect representation

Images can falsify as well as depict reality, mislead as well as inspire

Crispin Sartwell

A distinguishing feature of today’s politics in the United States is that they seem to turn as much on struggles over representations as they do over material resources or tangible political power.

For many people who are active in politics, especially on the left, a primary issue is how and by whom members of marginalised groups are depicted in film, television, social media and art. It strikes me that there is exponentially more public discussion of such matters than, for example, education policy.

Awards shows like the Oscars have become central battlegrounds in representation wars, partly because they have relatively large audiences and symbolise “mainstream” culture: To win a Grammy or an Oscar signals a certain sort of cultural currency.

The shows thus get read as capsules of the entire culture, and every aspect of their presentation gets evaluated demographically – from nominees and winners, presenters and performers, speeches and the audience in the auditorium, right down to Katy Perry’s shoes.

By these standards, the big awards shows are, fitfully, coming into conformity. The Grammys have survived, though not without controversy, and managed to find an acceptable host this time around (Alicia Keys) and a reasonable balance of demographic groups and concomitant styles.

The Oscars evidently still have some way to go. The sheer weight of group representation falling on the host and the likelihood that no comedian has a fully defensible Twitter feed seem to have been enough to scare everyone off.

It is often taken as obvious that the effects of representations are profound – and, in some sense, they are. There is no doubt that the experience for individuals of seeing performers like Sidney Poirier or Ellen DeGeneres wildly exceed the limits imposed on their identity groups did, in fact, change lives, primarily by enhancing self-esteem, or by making viewers believe that it was possible to live lives they hadn’t previously imagined.

But there are also good reasons to be sceptical of the real impact of such success stories, which can be depicted in ads and flaunted at awards ceremonies, in part to quell anger at systemic unfairness still in place.

Such depictions may be employed to generate more profit for the same commercial empires



Spike Lee speaking at the Oscars in Los Angeles on Sunday, after winning an award for best adapted screenplay for *BlackKkKlansman*, a film about a black man who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan. Awards shows like the Oscars have become central battlegrounds in representation wars, partly because they have relatively large audiences and symbolise “mainstream” culture, says the writer. PHOTO: NYTIMES

that engaged in the oppression in the first place. It is probably in the best interest of the goal of achieving a fairer, less discriminatory future to keep in mind that whatever the Grammys and Oscars look like in the long run will have little actual impact on social justice.

Perhaps, over all, the emphasis on what sort of person is on television has been a distraction from much more urgent matters. Imagine an America that gets the awards shows exactly right but in which, for example, mass incarceration or the internment of asylum seekers just ticks right along, or in which income inequality grows or residential segregation remains unchanged.

Racial and gender hierarchies are structural and material. They have to do with differential access to power and resources, along with the daily privilege that attends them. These could continue even in

the face of a representationally perfect movie industry.

SOVIET SOCIALIST REALISM

History has shown that representations do not create reality. The Soviet Union imposed a single style in the visual arts and enforced it for decades. Known as “socialist realism”, it relentlessly depicted strong, dignified workers, their shining eyes gazing upon a transformed future.

To a large extent, the Soviet Communist Party achieved and enforced a monopoly on all media to portray the world as the party wished it to be, or at least as it wished other people to think it was. That didn’t make the forced collectivisation of agriculture, in which millions of these same workers were displaced, dispossessed, starved and executed, hurt any less.

Josef Stalin annexed thousands of film-makers, novelists, painters,

dancers, musicians and architects to his project of embodying a more just and equal world, and sent those who wouldn’t help to the gulag. That made, for example, his ethnic cleansing of Chechnya hard for people elsewhere to know about, much less criticise. But it definitely did not make it not happen.

Many other sorts of regimes, from theocracies to military juntas, have tried similar approaches. The contribution of all that activity to producing the envisioned world has been considerably less than zero. It makes the brutal reality a bit harder to see, without ameliorating it in the slightest.

Now, Stalin is not an awards show. But, as everyone knows, images can falsify as well as depict reality; they can mislead as well as inspire.

On the other hand, to say that Black Panther is a falsification of reality is to say something that is obvious and ridiculous: It is a

superhero fantasy rendered by CGI, after all. It can’t magically transform any of us, though it could provide diverting entertainment and raise some interesting questions, maybe primarily about the history of movies.

LESSONS FROM SESAME STREET

To a very large extent, American media has portrayed a kind of racial paradise since the 1960s. Only a few extreme racists continue to use direct slurs, and no one does so on television. Sesame Street and, more or less, every other children’s programme have taught uplifting racial lessons for decades. White people came to believe by this means that we were not racists, because we did not produce or approve the prohibited representations. Meanwhile, the racism ticked right on at a structural level, but it became harder to identify and attribute.

When only approved images can

appear, we have what amounts to censorship – not imposed by the government, but by all of us on one another through social pressure.

The goal is a politically uniform flow of images. In order to achieve that uniformity, people are being vilified, pictures and Tweets deleted, novels withdrawn, films reshot with different actors, projects abandoned, works removed from museums, hosts disqualified and so on. Such procedures are not liable to help very much in achieving their intended goals.

It’s a lot easier to fix the pictures than fix the world. Additionally, it would be a relief if we stopped looking to awards shows to fix America’s social ills: If those things aren’t fun, there’s really no point.

NYTIMES

• Crispin Sartwell teaches philosophy at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.



French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel with the signed French-German friendship treaty on Jan 22 in Aachen, Germany. The two countries have been growing at odds, due to differences over concrete policy proposals and a fundamental divergence in their visions for Europe, says the writer. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Widening fissures in the Franco-German union

Despite vows of unity, they are drifting apart on a host of issues

Anna Sauerbrey

Times are rough for the European Union. The news coming from Britain grows more depressing every day.

Italy is governed by a maverick government searching for an open confrontation with France.

Hungary and Poland are slowly slipping into authoritarianism.

And we are headed for a European election in May that could result in further gains by populist parties.

It is tempting, then, to see a ray of hope in an agreement by Germany and France, announced last Friday, for a euro zone budget, which the two countries will present to their fellow member states.

Maybe, after years of delay, Paris and Berlin are finally taking the initiative to reverse Europe's seemingly unstoppable, slow-motion disintegration.

Not so fast. This latest deal aside, France and Germany, both founding powers of the EU and its most powerful members, have been growing increasingly at odds.

The discord is driven in part by differences over concrete policy proposals. But the bigger, intractable problem is a fundamental difference in their visions for Europe.

THE RHETORIC

This being Europe, the two countries have done their best to paper over their differences with rhetorical displays of unity.

Last November, French

President Emmanuel Macron stood on the floor of the German Bundestag to deliver a speech marking the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. Not holding back, he described the Franco-German relationship as one of love – a love born of the many catastrophes of the 20th century.

On Jan 22, the two countries even renewed their vows, so to speak, by signing an update to the 1963 Elysee Treaty, which announced a new era of comity between the two former enemies.

At these occasions, Germany seemed happy to adopt the French line on Europe, which Mr Macron laid out in a speech at the Sorbonne University in September 2017 – the idea of a deepened, “sovereign Europe” with a strong common foreign and defence policy, a “Europe that protects” its citizens.

Mr Macron believes, and Germany seems to agree, that the atrocities of the 20th century are no longer enough to justify all the effort to integrate Europe – especially the notion of a sacred Franco-German union.

Speaking in Aachen, Germany, last month, he called the reconciliation of a once-warring Europe “chose faite” – “a task accomplished.”

Both countries agree that many of the real threats to European peace today loom outside its borders: terrorism, the new great-power competition between China and the United States, and Russian interference in European elections, to name just a few.

A new narrative is needed, and it needs to be practical rather than proto-religious.

But rhetoric is easy.

Extruding it into a compelling vision, let alone specific policies, is much harder.

And so far, when it comes to anything beyond mere talk, the gap between the two countries grows ever wider.

THE DIFFERENCES

Here are just a few examples.

Germany and France deeply disagree on a strategy regarding European-American trade talks, even as American auto tariffs loom.

The German economy relies on exports to the US, especially cars, and would gladly accept higher agricultural imports to offset its trade surplus in manufactured goods. But France, whose agriculture lobby is strong, has so far resisted such concessions.

Or consider the tensions leading up to a last-minute compromise over the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline which, when completed, will carry Russian natural gas into Germany and on to Western Europe.

France pushed hard for European control over the negotiations, while Germany insisted on taking the lead.

Germany, which is home to several companies involved in the Russian-led consortium building the pipeline, supports it.

Much of the rest of Europe is sceptical, if not afraid of it as a geopolitical threat.

France's concession to Germany, allowing it to remain the lead negotiator, does not hide its deep philosophical difference: While France insisted on a collective European action, Germany defended its self-interest over its neighbours'.

The list continues into the field of defence and security policies.

Last year, Germany unilaterally put a hold on exports of weapons to Saudi Arabia after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi –

though both countries had pledged to coordinate their export policies – angering France.

The two countries diverge on their assessment of the transatlantic relationship, and on how sharp a reaction is needed towards China's geopolitical and technological expansion. (They did agree to renew their cooperation on developing a replacement for the Eurofighter Typhoon jet, but that was more of a business decision than a political one.)

In public, Mr Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel are amicable, and no one is warning of a political crisis – yet.

But Germany's resistance to Mr Macron's vision for a new European compact means that for now, the two countries will continue to drift apart.

Weirdly, Germany still seems to be lacking all sense of urgency. It does not have a competing vision, so much as a competing motive.

Perhaps it has grown complacent in an era where its economic dominance on the continent has too often meant that, for better or worse, it gets its way when it comes to EU policy.

In a fracturing EU, it is up to France and Germany to keep things together, which means that Germany needs to compromise, even if it comes at a political cost at home.

Covering the stalemate under a thick layer of love talk will not be enough to transcend the troubles of the Franco-German relationship.

France and Germany do not lack love. We do not even lack understanding. We lack action.

NYTIMES

• Anna Sauerbrey has been an editor and writer at German daily Der Tagesspiegel since 2011.

Disruptive ideas don't happen on a big team

Faye Flam

Moments of great scientific disruption aren't necessarily glamorous.

A world-changing idea might spring up when someone is sitting in an office or scrawling notes, or maybe riffing with a colleague. (Those few colourful stories of Newton's apple and Archimedes' bathtub are probably apocryphal.)

Big projects leave more vivid impressions – landing on the moon, testing atom bombs, or, more recently, finding the Higgs boson and detecting Einstein's predicted gravitational waves using a pair of sprawling but stunningly precise detectors.

The paper announcing the Higgs boson boasted 5,000 authors, the one on gravitational wave detection, 1,011 authors. So why bother with small projects at all?

A new analysis suggests the papers that spawn whole new branches of science most often spring from lone researchers or small groups, and the more innovative and disruptive the findings, the smaller the teams.

Big teams are still needed for some kinds of tasks, but the most successful of them either test an existing hypothesis or conduct some feat of applied science, such as turning the principle of nuclear fission into a bomb.

The small team of three people who published the team size analysis in last week's Nature took advantage of a massive database containing 65 million documented advances – scientific papers, patents and software products.

How do you measure disruption? Associate Professor Wang Dashun of Northwestern University said they looked for a telltale pattern in the way a paper was cited in subsequent work.

He and his colleagues reasoned that the more innovative papers would be cited without the older studies that they themselves cited. That would suggest these papers weren't continuing along known branches, but had started new ones. Less disruptive papers, by contrast, would be cited along with a string of previous work.

As an example, they point to a paper introducing a new phenomenon called self-organised criticality, which was cited without the trail of previous citations – and indeed it launched a new branch of research.

The disruptive papers also get cited longer into the future – even if they have lower impact at first.

“We realised, as team size increases, the character of the work they produce systematically changed,” said Prof Wang.

When they tracked individual scientists, they found the same person had more disruptive impact when part of smaller teams than when part of larger ones.

This comes at a time when small science needs some respect. As measured by the initial burst of early citations, the highest-impact papers have switched from those with individual authors to teams, said Professor Laszlo Barabasi, a network scientist at Northeastern University. “The problem is that funding agencies and foundations are in love with big science teams.” These bring instant gratification, he said, through their sheer ambition and commingling of big names.

In science, the most revolutionary ideas do not mean much until there is experimental confirmation, and there was no way to confirm either the Higgs boson or gravitational waves without gigantic projects.

Big projects employing thousands of people work well when their goal is to prove an existing idea, or to apply an existing idea to a needed task. And the result can go beyond the initial stated goal – the Large Hadron Collider used to detect the Higgs is more than just an experiment, it is also an instrument for exploring inner space, and the Ligo – Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory – experiment credited with finding gravitational waves is now an observatory poised to detect colliding black holes and other exotic phenomena.

Where the big-team approach failed badly was at the now defunct blood-testing company Therasano, whose rise and fall were chronicled in the book Bad Blood. The company's founder, Ms Elizabeth Holmes, had a goal – to make blood testing easier and cheaper, substituting a finger stick for a vein draw. What she didn't have was an idea for how to do this. The lack of a scientific or technological breakthrough didn't discourage investors from pouring in billions of dollars, but even with several well-outfitted labs and hundreds of people set to the task, that key innovation never materialised.

The moon shot and the Manhattan Project are often held up as banners for the power of big science, but this may be misguided. Historian Alex Wellerstein, quoted in Scientific American, put it this way: “Almost every week, someone, somewhere calls for a new Manhattan Project. Apparently we need a Manhattan Project for cancer, for Aids, for health, for solar power... for cyber security, for nutritional supplements and most literally for protecting the island of Manhattan from sea-level rise.”

The problem, as he saw it, was that these new calls for a new Manhattan Project were aimed at answering scientific questions, while the original Manhattan Project was aimed at applying a new scientific idea, nuclear fission, to bombs.

The science behind it was found by pairs and individuals, not making big explosions, but doing the mundane-looking task of thinking. BLOOMBERG

• Faye Flam is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. She has written for The Economist, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Psychology Today, Science and other publications.

BIG PICTURE



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Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
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PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Indian rail project on track

It was a breakthrough moment for the construction of the Ahmedabad Metro mass transit rail system on Monday when two tunnel boring machines ended their journey in a record breaking time of 11 months.

Here, a worker gets to work after one of the machines broke through the east-bound tunnel.

Phase 1 of the Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project covers a distance of about 40km, out of which approximately 6.5km is underground. The project will connect four corners of Ahmedabad city with two corridors – North-South and East-West – and 32 stations.

The tunnel has been constructed under the densely populated area of old Ahmedabad.

Construction began with a ground-breaking ceremony in March 2015, and is expected to be completed by next year.

The project aims to meet the transport needs of the city's growing population, which is expected to reach 8.64 million next year.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the first phase of the project on March 4.

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IT grads had highest starting pay last year

81.2% of new grads found full-time permanent work in 2018, up from 78.4% in 2017: Poll

Amelia Teng
Education Correspondent

Fresh university graduates earned a higher starting pay last year, with those in the information technology (IT) sector posting the highest rates for full-time permanent jobs.

Fresh grads took home a median monthly salary of \$3,500, up from \$3,400 in 2017, according to results of a joint graduate employment survey released yesterday.

Those in courses such as computing, business analytics and information security had the highest median gross monthly pay of \$4,100.

The annual survey, conducted last November, also found that 81.2 per cent of new graduates were in full-time permanent work, higher than the 78.4 per cent in 2017.

Overall, 90.2 per cent of them were employed, up from 88.9 per cent in 2017. This refers to graduates in full-time, part-time, temporary or freelance work.

The proportion of graduates doing freelance work fell from 2.4 per cent in 2017 to 1.8 per cent last year, while those who have still not been able to find a full-time job dropped by 2.1 percentage points.

For the first time, the survey also released employment outcomes by course clusters, to help students make decisions on course choices.

Graduates from the information and digital technologies, business

and built environment courses had the highest full-time permanent employment rates.

The survey polled 11,200 fresh graduates from full-time programmes at four universities – the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore Management University (SMU) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS).

The joint exercise is conducted by the six autonomous universities six months after their graduates' final exams. Due to differences in calendars, the Singapore University of Technology and Design and the Singapore Institute of Technology poll their graduates separately.

The universities said many of their graduates managed to find full-time jobs through internships. For instance, more than a third of SUSS' first batch of full-time accountancy graduates were offered jobs through work attachments, while half of the graduates from SMU who had job offers before finishing school received them through internships.

SMU graduate Tay Jing Ying, 24, is now a technology analyst at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, where she had done an internship during her third year of university.

The information systems graduate said: "I tell my friends that we're quite lucky to graduate at the right time, when a lot of companies are



SUSS graduate Nurul Amira Azhar, 24, started work last July as an analyst with media intelligence firm Meltwater. PHOTO: SUSS

Which field of study has better job prospects?

New university graduates took home a higher median monthly pay of \$3,500 last year, up from \$3,400 in 2017, according to an annual survey released yesterday. For the first time, it also released job outcomes by disciplines to help students make decisions on course choices. Here's a look at last year's numbers.

Course clusters	Full-time permanent employment rate (%)	Median gross monthly salary
Information and digital technologies	91.7	\$4,100
Engineering	84.1	\$3,600
Health sciences	83.8	\$3,489
Business	89.7	\$3,450
Built environment	87.3	\$3,400
Humanities and social sciences	71.2	\$3,400
Sciences	68.7	\$3,390
Arts, design and media	69.8	\$3,000
Overall	81.2	\$3,500

Source: JOINT GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT SURVEY 2018
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

using technology to improve systems and work processes, and they need IT graduates."

SUSS graduate Nurul Amira Azhar, 24, who started work last July as an analyst with media intelligence firm Meltwater, said she decided to study marketing as it involves a mix of creative and business skills.

"There is a lot of data coming in on different platforms, from both mainstream media and social media, so there is growing demand for analysts in this field," she said.

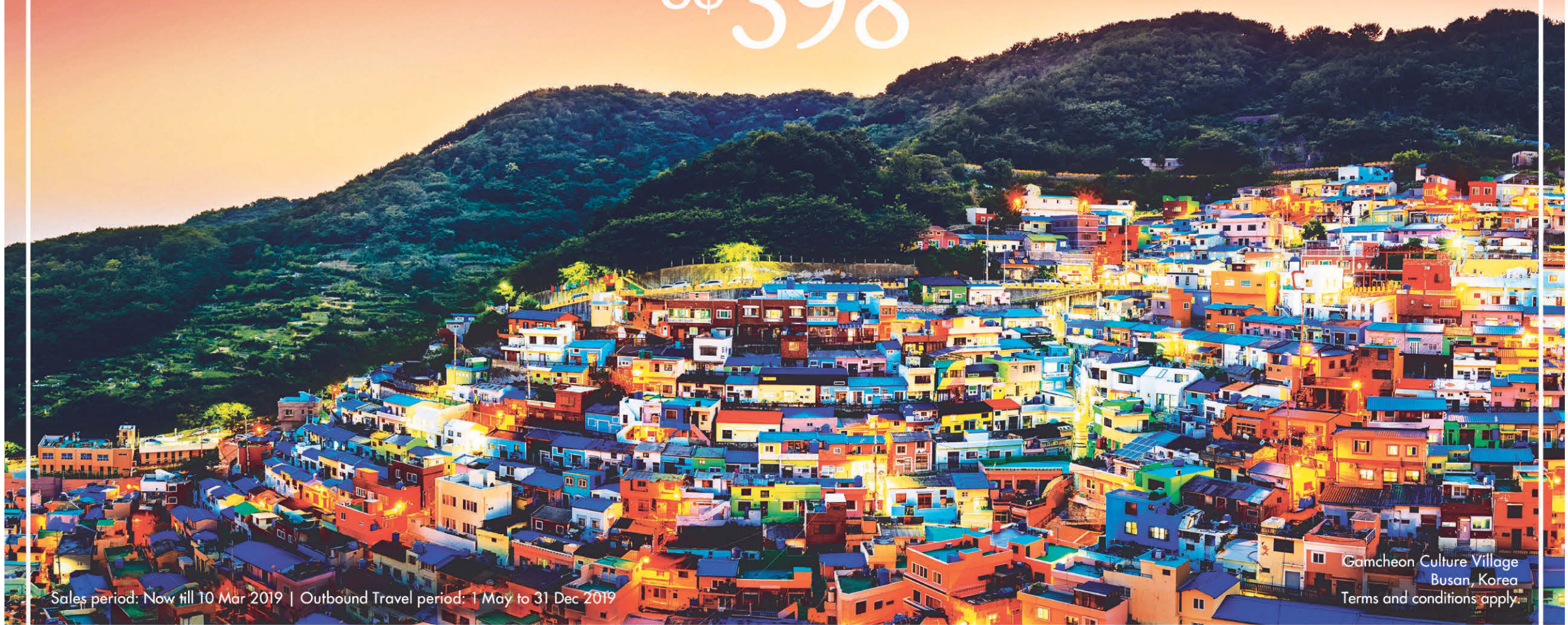
NUS computer science graduate Leonard Hio, 25, now a software engineer at Facebook in California, feels lucky to be at the forefront of advances in the tech industry.

On why he chose to work overseas, he said: "I wanted the opportunity to work with and learn from the best and brightest engineers in the field. Also, the total compensation package for jobs in the Bay area is typically very attractive for new graduates in the tech industry."

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Halimah: Religious teachers' influence comes with responsibility

They must lead based on true Islamic teachings, help guide community towards progress

Cheryl Teh

Asatizahs or religious teachers have a certain standing and influence in the community, and that comes with a responsibility to ensure they lead their followers based on the true teachings of Islam, said President Halimah Yacob.

And these teachers, she added, can also be a positive influence in helping to guide the Malay community towards achieving progress, and living peacefully with others.

Said Madam Halimah: "Any view that promotes violence is wrong; what more if it is done in the name of religion and trying to appeal to the spiritual and emotional needs of people to achieve certain objectives."

Madam Halimah made the remarks in a speech during a visit yesterday to the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) resource and counselling centre at the Khadijah

Mosque in Geylang Road. She lauded the decision of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) to cancel the accreditation of a former religious teacher or us-taz who propagated beliefs that were wrong in Islam, and "incompatible with Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious context".

Freelance religious teacher Murad Mohd Said, 46, and one of his students, technician Razali Abas, 56, were issued with restriction orders under the Internal Security Act. Murad was propagating divisive racial beliefs, and Razali demonstrated militant tendencies after being exposed to Murad's teachings.

Madam Halimah said the fight against terrorism on the ideological front needs to remain strong and unwavering.

She said: "We must not be complacent. This could be the calm before the storm. The threat of self-radicalisation persists, especially through

the Internet, and the authorities continue to detect people influenced by extremist rhetoric."

She added that extremist groups continue to be active and are recruiting supporters, and that Singapore must remain vigilant at all times because this is a long-term

>90

Number of terrorism-related detainees who have been rehabilitated, released from detention and re-integrated into society.

challenge, and one that is global as well as domestic. In this respect, the RRG has played a critical role in combating terrorism and extremism in Singapore, she said.

The centre is open to members of the public who wish to seek clarification on radical ideologies and violent extremism, and provides counselling services as well.

Said Madam Halimah: "Today, as I went through the exhibits, I was reminded of how the critical role of the RRG in combating terrorism and extremism in Singapore has evolved and strengthened over the years, and how much we have benefited from your good work."

The RRG has also helped individuals in the early stages of radicalisation get back on the correct path, she said, adding that it also educates the wider public, making society more resilient against extremist ideologies.

Individuals like Murad and Razali

usually undergo rehabilitation and counselling at places like the RRG, to steer them away from radical ideologies and extremist tendencies.

More than 90 terrorism-related detainees, including many who were part of terrorist groups like Jamaah Islamiah, have been rehabilitated, released from detention and re-integrated into society, said Madam Halimah.

But she added that there is still more to be done to counter the spread of wrong ideologies and terrorism by extremists.

She said: "The fight against terrorism on the ideological front must continue to remain strong and unwavering."

"We must not let dangerous ideas fester or allow them to gnaw at our social fabric. If any such views were to surface, we should nip them in the bud."

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Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) vice-chairman Mohamed Ali (left) showing President Halimah Yacob and her husband, Mr Mohamed Abdullah Alhabshee, around the RRG resource and counselling centre at the Khadijah Mosque during their visit yesterday. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Woman dies in Tuas Checkpoint crash

Goh Yan Han

One woman was killed and 16 other people were injured after their bus collided into a railing at the Tuas Checkpoint early yesterday.

The 35-year-old victim was pronounced dead at the scene by

paramedics, said the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA).

The bus driver, 59, was arrested for causing death by a rash act, police said.

The accident blocked the heavy vehicle lane from about 4.20am, causing traffic to pile up, as buses and lorries bound for Singapore

were unable to enter the checkpoint. The ICA subsequently closed the lane and the heavy vehicles were turned back to Malaysia. The lane was reopened at about 10am.

Responding to a call for assistance, Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) officers arrived at the accident scene in Jalan Ahmad Ibrahim to find the bus against the railing and the driver trapped in his seat. He had to be rescued using hydraulic equipment, SCDF said.

Two women were found outside the bus. One was pronounced dead and the other suffered serious injuries.

The driver and 11 passengers were taken to Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and National University Hospital. Four other passengers with minor injuries declined to be taken to hospital.

Three passengers were hospitalised and the rest discharged.

Confirming that some of its employees had been on the bus, a spokesman for technology company HP said: "Our thoughts are with those who were involved, and we are doing everything we can to provide



A picture (left) circulating widely on social media showing the damaged bus after the accident that caused a major traffic jam at the Second Link (above). PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG, DEEJAY NESH/FACEBOOK

able to move, as they stopped us and were allowing buses and lorries to make a U-turn back to Malaysia."

One victim, understood to be an HP employee, was sitting in the middle of the bus when the crash occurred.

"Everyone was sleeping when it happened, and we were woken by a strong impact. My arms and legs were hurting, and it was very chaotic," Ms Vani, 43, told Chinese daily Lianhe Wanbao.

The bus appeared to have had braking issues before it hit the railing, she said, and many of those injured were cut by broken glass.

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• Additional reporting by Jev Akshay Jeevan

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Prison statistics for 2018

RECIDIVISM RATES

Recidivism	2014 release cohort	2015 release cohort	2016 release cohort
Overall	26.5%	25.9%	23.7%
Penal	25.8%	25.1%	23.7%
Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC)	30.1%	29.5%	23.8%

TOTAL OFFENDER POPULATION IN PRISONS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Offender population	2016	2017	2018
In-care	11,503	10,948	10,809
Community corrections	1,894	1,688	1,998
Total	13,397	12,636	12,807

*As at Dec 31 that year

TOTAL CONVICTED PENAL ADMISSIONS

Category	2016	2017	2018
Total convicted penal admissions	10,211	8,974	9,471
Admission age group	61-65	237	249
	66 and above	124	124

DRC ADMISSIONS

Category	2016	2017	2018
Total DRC admissions	1,263	1,152	1,257
Admission age group	61-65	11	16
	66 and above	7	4

EMPLACEMENT AND COMPLETION RATES FOR COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMME

Placement number	2016	2017	2018
CBP for penal inmates	918	951	1,098
CBP for DRC inmates	999	964	952

Completion Rates	2016	2017	2018
CBP for penal inmates	98.1%	97.7%	98.5%
CBP for DRC inmates	88.3%	89.6%	86.3%

Source: SINGAPORE PRISON SERVICE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

As S’pore society ages, the inmate population greys too

8.9% of prisoners last year above 60, up from 6.1% in 2016; drug rehab centre sees smaller jump

Cara Wong

More people aged above 60 were sent to prison and the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC) last year.

Of the 9,471 prison admissions last year, 486 involved prisoners aged above 60, statistics released by the Singapore Prison Service showed yesterday.

This would be the first time in at least 10 years that their numbers have risen above 400.

Similarly, the number of such admissions to the DRC last year also jumped by 45 per cent to 29 – the largest such intake in the last eight years.

The increased intake in both the prison and the DRC contributed to a rise in the proportion of inmates above the age of 60. They made up 8.9 per cent of the prison population as at Dec 31 last year, up from 6.1 per cent in 2016.

In the DRC, they comprised 2.9 per cent of the population, up from 2.1 per cent in 2016.

This trend is a reflection of Singapore’s ageing population, said sociologist Tan Ern Ser.

The latest statistics also showed a positive trend, with more offenders staying out of trouble with the law in the first two years after their release.

The overall recidivism rates hit a six-year-low of 23.7 per cent for the cohort released in 2016.

This rate could be reduced further by making sure inmates were personally committed to change, said the prison service.

On top of that, it said, they should receive help to find work and accommodation, as well as family and community support.

To help rehabilitate offenders in a community setting, more of them have been placed in community-based schemes where they are supervised by prison officers while being out in the community, said the prison service.

There were 1,098 inmates who served the tail-end of their sentences on the Community-Based Programme (CBP) last year, an increase of 15.4 per cent from the year before.

Community-based schemes include the Day Reporting Order scheme, where offenders are free to go out but have to report back regularly to prison officers.

The 1,098 placed on the CBP last year constituted the largest number in the last three years. They served out their sentences in halfway houses, on home detention or on work release schemes.

Almost all prisoners completed the programme, and the completion rate for last year’s cohort reached a three-year high of 98.5 per cent.

More offenders also took part in a supervised aftercare regime after serving out their sentences, with 734 inmates placed on the mandatory aftercare scheme, more than double the number from the year before.

Such correction programmes prepare inmates for their release by helping them transition out of a prison setting, said Superintendent of Prisons Karen Lee, who oversees community-based schemes as the deputy director of the Community Corrections Command.

She said these programmes allowed offenders to practise skills learnt in prison, while being supervised by prison officers whom they must regularly report to.

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Supervision key to transformation

Despite having been imprisoned four times for a variety of offences, Mr Ahmad (not his real name) was always ill-disciplined at work after his release.

However, in the past nine months since he was last freed from jail, he has been able to hold down a steady job in a cleaning company and was recently even promoted to a supervisor.

The former convict, 48, credits his transformation to the Work Release Scheme (WRS) he was placed on in May last year.

He is among a growing number of prisoners on the Community-Based Programme (CBP), which includes the WRS.

There were 1,098 inmates who served the tail-end of their sentences on the CBP last year, an increase of 15.4 per cent from the year before. Under the programme, offenders regularly report back and are supervised by prison officers while in halfway houses, under home detention or on the WRS.

For Mr Ahmad, this constant supervision has motivated him to be

disciplined on the job.

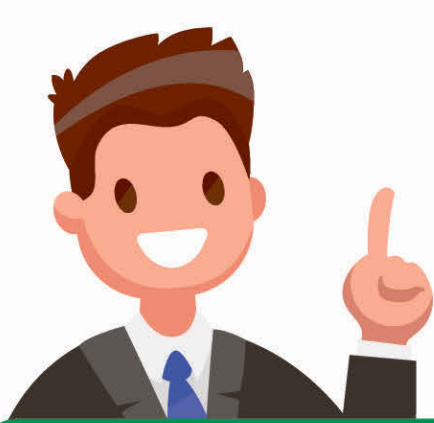
In the past, when he was released from prison after serving time for offences like manslaughter or for causing hurt, he had absolute “freedom” and would flit from job to job such as being a boat captain or a technician. He was also not committed to his job, and would feign an illness if he did not feel like working on any given day.

“With this programme, I must control myself. I’ve got the RO (re-integration officer) and the Singapore After-Care Association taking care of me, so I must take care of my conduct. It helps me a lot,” said Mr Ahmad.

Being within a structured environment with a curfew to adhere to, he has also learnt to manage his time better and to differentiate between his needs and his wants, said Mr Ahmad.

“Up till now, I have maintained my (good behaviour). If I have any problems, I will talk to my RO and my job coach,” he said.

Cara Wong



An **ntuc** Initiative

A *Smarter Way* to Procure Landscape Maintenance Services

Technology + Manpower =
Better Service Outcomes + Better Value

SERVICE BUYERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES:

- Specify service outcomes and performance standards instead of headcount in tender specifications
- Allow longer lead time for service providers to submit proposals that incorporate technology solutions
- Provide longer contract durations to lower amortised cost of technology solutions
- Adopt Price-Quality Method where quality attributes have heavier weightage over price

For more details, refer to the Tripartite Advisory on Best Sourcing Practices at bit.ly/best-sourcing-practices

The Progressive Wage Model (PWM) is a mandatory requirement for landscape companies applying to be on the Landscape Company Register, administered by the National Parks Board. Registered companies must ensure that their resident landscape maintenance employees are trained and paid according to the PWM wage levels.

To read the full recommendations by the Tripartite Cluster for Landscape Industry Scan or visit ntuc.org.sg/tripartiteguidelines



Progressive Wage Model for the Landscape Maintenance Sub-sector				
From 1 July 2020, the basic wage levels will increase:				
Landscape Supervisor	\$2,100	\$2,250	\$2,350	\$2,450
Assistant Landscape Supervisor	\$1,700	\$1,850	\$1,950	\$2,050
Landscape Technician	\$1,500	\$1,650	\$1,750	\$1,850
Landscape Worker	\$1,300	\$1,450	\$1,550	\$1,650
All wage points refer to basic starting salary.	Current	From 1 July 2020	From 1 July 2021	From 1 July 2022

From 2020, a PWM Bonus of at least 2 weeks of basic salary must be paid to eligible landscape maintenance employees who have worked with the same employer for at least 12 months.



KEEN TO FIND OUT MORE? CONTACT US TODAY!



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In consultation with:



Budget 2019 debate

FromTheBackbench



MS FOO MEE HAR (West Coast GRC)

Postpone GST hike

With Singapore having accumulated an estimated surplus of \$15 billion since 2016, Ms Foo urged the Government to postpone the “unpopular GST hike for as long as possible”. She was referring to the planned GST hike of 2 percentage points, from 7 per cent to 9 per cent, between 2021 and 2025.

Budget surpluses unused by the end of each term of government will be transferred to past reserves.

Another suggestion she had was to share surpluses with Singaporeans regularly when the nation’s finances allow for it, just as the Government is doing with this year’s \$1.1 billion Bicentennial Bonus.

“There is no better way to build social cohesion than to share these upsides with the people,” she said.



MR SEAH KIAN PENG (Marine Parade GRC)

Ethics committee for science and tech

A national committee that looks at the ethics of science and technology should be set up, Mr Seah suggested.

This team, comprising government officers, ordinary folk, scientists and philosophers, would look at how new technology impacts humans and their relationships – and whether or not it should be deployed.

“Our ability to incorporate technology in our lives has far outstripped our ability to reason morally about the choices that we will be forced to make as a technological society... Choices that are not just about efficiency and speed, but about values – good, bad, right, wrong,” he said.



MR ZAINAL SAPARI (Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC)

Show gratitude to low-wage workers

Society at large can make a difference to how low-wage workers feel about their jobs. Mr Zainal urged the public to show gratitude to such workers – including cleaners, security officers and landscape workers – and for the part they play in creating a clean, green and safe environment for everyone.

They can do so through simple acts like returning their own trays at food centres, greeting them, not littering and not thinking “that you are doing them a favour by creating work for them”, the labour MP said.

“These acts don’t cost us a thing, but they can go a long way in brightening up their lives. Make it our habit to care. A gracious society does not happen by chance – it is up to you and me to make a difference.”



MR PRITAM SINGH (Aljunied GRC)

Tackle recycling and food waste

Very little is recycled and too much food waste is generated here. To that end, the Workers’ Party chief wants the inaugural Zero Waste Masterplan, due to be announced later this year, to state explicitly how to tackle this and what the targets would be.

It was reported that in 2016, only 2 per cent of the total waste generated by the domestic sector came from the national recycling effort, in which blue bins are put in places such as Housing Board estates.

“Like the Government’s successful water story, closing the waste cycle would be a significant chapter of the Singapore story and would provide a blueprint for other cities to consider,” he said.



NTUC in industry project to nurture ‘Worker 4.0’

It is partnering firms to set up committees to identify training and skills workers will need

Seow Bei Yi
Business Correspondent

The National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) has taken steps to set up “training committees” that identify the types of training and skills workers will need to keep up with the transformation of the industries they are in.

Its secretary-general Ng Chee Meng said NTUC has worked with about 10 companies in a pilot project to set up these committees, which comprise management staff and union leaders, to help nurture what he termed as “Worker 4.0”.

“For Industry 4.0 to be actualised, we need our workers to

transform in parallel with their companies and industries because there can be no Industry 4.0 without the worker,” Mr Ng said yesterday, the first day of the debate on the Budget statement.

NTUC is working with companies in sectors ranging from port engineering to aviation, including SIA Engineering as well as in-flight catering service provider Sats.

Together with NTUC, companies are working out future versions or archetypes of their employees, and hence the skills gap and training required for their present workforce.

“Our intention is to help our workers visualise the potential of Industry 4.0 for their companies, and for...their careers,” he added.

The partnerships cover about 64,000 workers and the plan is to expand the collaboration to all of NTUC’s unionised companies.

He gave the example of PSA senior mechanical engineer Ng Hwee Sheng, who took on a larger role managing automated and intelligent systems at the port operator after completing a year-long systems engineering course at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT).

Mr Ng said that with examples of workers who have moved towards Worker 4.0, the hope is that more will do so and take personal responsibility in upgrading their skills.

He suggested that the training committees can chart skills and competency requirements, put in place training programmes such as PSA’s one-year systems engineering course at SIT, and schedule worker training to minimise downtime on ongoing operations.

He also pledged that NTUC will do its best to support workers who feel displaced by rapid changes.

Mr Ng was among several MPs who gave suggestions and updates on how workers can be supported.

Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Koh Poh Koon, who is NTUC’s deputy secretary-general, said firms need to have better training for older workers to improve their skills in using technology. He said NTUC will work with unions, industry partners, government agencies and institutes of higher learning to simplify the training space.

NTUC assistant secretary-general Patrick Tay (West Coast GRC) wants professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs) who earn between \$2,500 and \$3,500 a month to also benefit from the Progressive Wage Model (PWM), which helps to raise wages by upgrading skills and improving productivity.

“It is timely to scale these efforts on a national level and extend the PWM to lower-wage PMETs to provide for their progression and upward labour mobility,” he said.

Mr Melvin Yong (Tanjong Pagar GRC), who is also an NTUC assistant secretary-general, suggested ways to boost workplace safety and health, like compulsory yearly health check-ups for employees.

There could also be differentiated insurance premiums for companies, with those who face many claims for similar incidents paying higher premiums, he added.

The PSA Living Lab (above) with an Automated Guided Vehicle on an operational trial. NTUC secretary-general Ng Chee Meng suggested that the new training committees can put in place programmes such as PSA’s one-year systems engineering course at the Singapore Institute of Technology. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

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Freelancers need more help with training needs: Labour MP

Government agencies can do more to help freelancers in terms of training courses and allowances, said labour MP Ang Hin Kee (Ang Mo Kio GRC).

Mr Ang, who is assistant director-general of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), said one in 10 workers today is either a freelancer or self-employed, and these workers’ training tends to be self-funded. They can also be deterred by the potential loss of income.

“They do not have easy access to courses and support. It can be extra daunting if they work in specialised fields where there are few local providers or experts,” said Mr Ang in Parliament yesterday.

NTUC has customised SkillsFuture for Digital Workplace training for taxi drivers and sports coaches, and the Infocomm Media Development Authority offers training allowances to ease the loss of income when media freelancers attend approved training.

Other government agencies, too, can do more to introduce such support systems, said Mr Ang.

Budget 2019 also included initiatives such as the Global Ready Talent Programme, which young freelancers are keen to join.

Mr Ang said he hopes the authorities will consider tie-ups between freelancer associations and NTUC to send these young workers to key regional markets for overseas work experience.

He also suggested ways to help taxi and private-hire car drivers, such as making sure all operators ensure their drivers have insurance for prolonged medical leave.

“To this end, I also appreciate the efforts by the Ministry of Manpower and Land Transport Authority to engage these operators. It is actions such as these that will affirm their assertions that drivers’ interests matter to them,” he said.

He called for more support for taxi drivers as well, to help them manage higher operating costs amid a rise in diesel duty.

While the hike was accompanied by a \$850 permanent reduction of the annual special tax on diesel taxis, Mr Ang said NTUC has asked operators to provide help beyond just passing on the rebate to drivers.

They can also help by passing on road tax savings and reducing pump prices under their charge. ComfortDelGro and other taxi operators have been selling discounted diesel to cabbies since the 1990s.

Mr Ang urged ministries, in their taxi licensing criteria, to look at whether the operators implement positive outcomes for workers.

“If operators are not keen on doing more, the Government can consider issuing fuel pump licensing rights to the unions,” he added.

“We can then appoint the appropriate operator who will sell fuel at the right price to members and help them manage costs.”

Seow Bei Yi

Firms urged to improve plight of low-wage service workers

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

Those who procure services can do more to improve the plight of low-wage workers, said labour MP Zainal Sapari yesterday.

These include focusing on quality

rather than price as well as making sure contracts have fair clauses and no unreasonable liquidated damages, said Mr Zainal (Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC).

On top of that, the companies that procure such services should consider longer contract periods, which will give service providers

an incentive to invest in technology.

When contracts are renewed, service buyers should also take into consideration that the incumbent workers are more experienced and familiar with the job requirements, and ensure they are not worse off.

“Adopting progressive procurement practices will achieve more favourable outcomes for all, including better welfare for our outsourced, low-wage workers,” he added.

Mr Zainal said those who procure services have a “moral responsibility” to look after the welfare of such

outsourced workers.

“This includes training – allowing service providers to send their workers for training without re-requesting headcount replacements – and workplace welfare.”

He also called for building owners and those who procure such services to set aside dedicated rest

areas for these workers, and urged government agencies to set the example.

Mr Zainal also stressed that service providers must not bid for contracts at the expense of workers’ welfare.

“Service providers should not gamble on their workers’ wages and welfare and hope that the contract they won through price undercutting will bring them profit.”

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Budget 2019 debate

From The Backbench



MS DENISE PHUA (Jalan Besar GRC)

Help those who help the disadvantaged

Allow voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) to invest in Singapore Savings Bonds, suggested Ms Phua, who co-founded autism-focused school Pathlight. “Unless they are more financially independent, much of their time will be taken up to seek funds instead of strengthening their services,” she said. She also suggested further incentivising donors to eligible charities by offering a 300 per cent tax deduction provision for the Bicentennial Community Fund, similar to that implemented for SG50 in 2015. Another suggestion was for the authorities to invest in and nurture VWOs with good track records and help them build social enterprises and revenue-earning arms to reduce their dependence on donations.



NON-CONSTITUENCY MP DENNIS TAN

Resiliency of aviation, maritime sectors

While the future Terminal 5 and development of Changi East are exciting projects for Changi Airport, Mr Tan raised concerns about whether intentions by Malaysia and Indonesia to take back delegated airspace surrounding Singapore will affect these plans and the Republic’s position as a major air hub, as well as its aerospace industry. On the maritime front, Mr Tan, a shipping lawyer, was also concerned about challenges to Singapore’s port and maritime sector, such as the opening of the Arctic or Northern Sea Route and the Melaka port, as well as Malaysia’s move last year to unilaterally extend the Johor Baru port limits and encroach into Singapore’s territorial waters.



MR CHONG KEE HIONG (Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC)

Buy more local produce

Singaporeans should “buy Singapore” and purchase more local produce, in a bid to boost the nation’s food resilience, Mr Chong feels. “Initially, buying local may mean paying a higher price. But we must continue to support local suppliers and vendors so that when volume picks up, prices would drop correspondingly,” he said. Such a movement will not only help ensure the sustainability of producing local food but also reduce the country’s carbon footprint. And by supporting local food producers, they may eventually be able to scale up and go regional or global, he added.



MR SAKTIANDI SUPAAT (Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC)

Raise spending to help ITE students

Spending on students at the Institute of Technical Education should be raised, Mr Saktiandi suggested. This segment forms about 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the post-secondary cohort each year – “a significant future labour force with key skill sets for us to be future-ready”, he said. He noted that while there are many financial assistance programmes for ITE students, poor time management and prioritising of resources are reasons why some fall behind. He hoped that a proactive approach could be taken to counsel students, particularly new admissions, to manage their resources and get needed help.

Rachel Au-Yong and Adrian Lim

Call to help caregivers return to work

Heng Chee How seeks more part-time, flexi-work options to tap latent manpower pool

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

Labour MP Heng Chee How has called for greater efforts to tap Singapore’s “latent working population” by matching people with caregiving responsibilities to part-time jobs.

He believes that getting caregivers to work will help solve the current “structural mismatch” be-

tween the demand and supply for manpower, indicating that a change is overdue in the labour market which “has long been based on the full-time staffing model”.

Mr Heng, who is Senior Minister of State for Defence, is deputy secretary-general of the National Trades Union Congress.

He was the first of 10 labour MPs who spoke in Parliament yesterday, during the debate on this year’s Budget statement.

In his speech, he pointed out that companies across many sectors have been “crying out for manpower to meet their needs”.

Surveys have also shown that a significant proportion of women who quit their jobs to be caregivers would like to return to work if they can find part-time jobs that allow them to balance work and family, he added.

“This also means that if more companies have such options, many of those who had to quit to care for family would have been able to stay in work, earn and provide better for their immediate and longer-term needs,” he said.

Mr Heng noted that there are only four sources any country can tap to get manpower.

The first is school-leavers entering the workforce, but these numbers “were set two decades ago”.

Second, it can rely on industry transformation to improve productivity, so that the same number of people can create more economic value through their work.

The third is foreign manpower. But in Singapore’s case, the size, mix and growth of this labour source have to be managed judiciously, said Mr Heng.

The fourth is making the best use of the working-age population, in-

cluding those in the “latent pool”.

Mr Heng added that Singapore’s full-time mature worker employment rate is 67.1 per cent, which compares favourably with many of the developed nations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

But the equivalent rate for part-time workers here is only 8.3 per cent.

As a result, it ranks 10th on the list of full-time employment rate for mature workers, but only 23rd when it comes to the part-time rate.

“This tells us that most Singapore companies have not yet learnt how

to ably utilise and integrate part-time and other flexible work options into their mainstream manpower model or are, perhaps, also unwilling to do so,” Mr Heng said.

“This is despite years of promoting flexible work arrangements by the tripartite partners at national and company levels.”

Calling for a thorough review of how such work arrangements can fit into mainstream staffing models, he said: “We have to investigate mindsets, close knowledge gaps and consider incentives to open the way and grow the capacity.”

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Forcing older workers to retire prematurely is a waste of human capital, said Non-Constituency MP Daniel Goh, adding that removing the retirement age, however, does not mean getting Singaporeans to “work until they die”. ST FILE PHOTO

Suggestions to raise, remove retirement age

Many older workers not ready to retire, says unionist

Veteran unionist Arasu Duraisamy has suggested raising both the retirement age and re-employment age to help older workers stay employed.

Speaking in Parliament yesterday, the Nominated MP said the retirement age could go up from 62 to 65, and the re-employment age from 67 to 70.

Mr Arasu, a member of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) central committee, said: “Many of the older workers have told us they are not ready to retire for good.”

Some of them, he added, need to support their families, others hope to build up funds for healthcare or retirement, and many say they are still healthy, physically able and want to be gainfully employed.

Said Mr Arasu: “The extension of

the retirement age and re-employment age provides certainty to workers who want to continue working, and allows a longer runway for employers to plan for training and upskilling, as well as adapt to digital transformation holistically.”

Mr Arasu was one of three MPs who urged the Government to make changes to the age of retirement and re-employment to provide greater certainty for older workers.

He lauded recent measures to increase support for older workers, such as increased annual payouts from the Workfare Income Supplement scheme for those with low wages, and the topping up of the Special Employment Credit to coax employers to hire seniors.

But Mr Arasu added: “While these are helpful to older workers, the

best support is ensuring they have a good job.”

More than 20 firms, including ComfortDelGro and Gardens by the Bay, have raised the retirement age to 65, and some firms have no contractual retirement age.

Mr Arasu said: “From time to time, the labour movement also receives appeals from workers seeking assistance to extend their re-employment contracts.

“I urge the civil service and other government-linked companies to quickly take the lead.”

He also spoke about the importance of training workers and educating those in their 50s.

Mr Arasu said: “We need to change their mindset and help educate them that training and skills upgrading are necessary for them to remain relevant. In view of digital transformation and an ageing workforce, ensuring that both SMEs and their workers are pro-training is especially important.”

Linette Lai

Do away with retirement age, Daniel Goh urges

Non-Constituency MP Daniel Goh wants the retirement age to be removed and the re-employment age to be raised to 70, to help workers age with dignity and independence.

Forcing them to retire prematurely is a waste of human capital, said Dr Goh, who also urged the Government to restore the Central Provident Fund (CPF) contributions of these workers.

“Our older workers should be respected for their experience gathered in a lifetime, and not forcibly retired when they still have so much to contribute in meaningful ways,” he said in Parliament yesterday during the debate on the Budget statement.

Dr Goh, who is from the Workers’ Party, was one of three MPs to

call for changes to the retirement and re-employment ages.

The others were Workers’ Party MP Faisal Manap (Aljunied GRC) and Nominated MP Arasu Duraisamy, who is a member of the National Trades Union Congress’ central committee.

Dr Goh, however, also stressed that removing the retirement age does not mean getting Singaporeans to “work until they die”.

“It is to reform the system so that Singaporeans do not have to worry about their finances and can retire in their 60s if they want to, but they can also continue to work if they want to,” he said.

He said those who want to retire in their 60s should be empowered to do so, adding: “The ideal would be that from today, no Merdeka-

Generation Singaporean would be compelled to retire or forced to work by necessity.”

Dr Goh, speaking in support of his party’s call for a permanent universal healthcare scheme for seniors, also urged the Government to allow partial CPF withdrawals if a person is so physically or mentally incapacitated that he cannot work for a significant period of time.

Other proposals he made involved changes to help Singaporeans age with independence.

These included allowing CPF payouts at the age of 60, increasing Medisave top-ups for older women to close the gender gap in CPF, and promoting the Lease Buyback Scheme among those in the Merdeka Generation, who were born in the 1950s.

Many women in the Merdeka Generation may have suffered the opportunity cost of giving up full-time work to care for others, he said.

Linette Lai

Budget 2019 debate

FromTheGallery

Challenges for employers in more complex economy

Tightening of foreign worker quotas a wake-up call for firms



Chua Mui Hoong

Opinion Editor

This being the bicentennial year, I was in a reflective mood when I walked into Parliament House yesterday to cover the debate on the 2019 Budget delivered last week.

The first Parliament sitting I attended was in 1991. I tagged along with my senior colleagues to the Old Parliament House. When it ended, I was sent home without having to write anything because Parliament reports then were deemed very important and sensitive – too much so to entrust

to a rookie mere weeks into the job. Since then, I have reported and commented on many sittings.

What a different Parliament it has become today. The Chamber is replete with colour. Nominated MP and Paralympian gold medallist Yip Pin Xiu is wheeled in, dressed in a richly hued blue dress, her hair in French braids. Then Senior Minister of State (Health, and the Environment and Water Resources) Amy Khor enters in a sleeveless floral dress, smiling as she makes the customary bow to the chair.

In 1991, there were all of two female elected MPs, making 2.5 per cent of the total. Today, there are 19 or about 22 per cent.

In 1991, the Budget expenditure was \$15.8 billion. This year, it is \$80 billion. The entire 1991 Budget could have been financed by this year's projected Net Investment Returns Contribution, as this component – made up of half the expected long-term real returns from the reserves – came up to \$16.4 billion. There is no doubt that the country has grown more diverse, and a lot more complex.

But core issues remain, including

the need to help businesses compete and workers improve their skills to remain employable.

Workers were at the forefront of many MPs' minds yesterday. How to help older workers stay employed and get better wages; how to help middle-income workers to reskill; what can be done to buffer young workers riding the waves of disruption; how to get middle-aged women who leave the workforce to care for elderly parents back to work – these were some of the concerns of MPs such as Mr Heng Chee How, Mr Zainal Sapari and Mr Desmond Choo, who are from the labour movement NTUC.

Several MPs raised with concern the move to reduce the dependency ratio ceiling (DRC) for the service sector. Ms Jessica Tan (East Coast GRC) said this "has sent a strong message to companies on the need to be more productive and to rely less on foreign workers".

Echoing a view that many employers will agree with, she noted that this would not be easy for companies to achieve as they already face difficulties attracting local workers, and asked why this

might be so. She said: "Is it a question of not being able to attract Singaporeans to the jobs? Are the factors due to the demographic changes with an ageing population? Or, is it because of the demands and working conditions of the jobs?"

"Or is it due to the higher expectations that Singaporeans have of work? Is it an issue of the salary levels? Or is it an issue about the cost of getting Singaporeans to do the job in the service sector?"

"I believe that the answer is that it's all of the above."

Employers will have to raise the productivity and quality of the workforce, she observed.

In his reply, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Chee Hong Tat said the Government had "agonised" over the decision but decided to go ahead to tighten the flow. The number of S-Pass and work permit holders in the service sector has increased by 34,000 in the last three years. If the numbers go up, Singaporeans' job prospects could be affected.

Sectors affected include accommodation, information and communications, food services, retail and professional services. Help was available for firms that sought to raise productivity, and train and hire locals, Mr Chee said.

Indeed, the tightening of foreign worker quotas is a wake-up call for local companies, and it can help them become better employers to win over local workers.

Singapore's employers can be a rigid lot – witness the relative weakness of flexi- and part-time options despite years, even decades, of encouragement. As Mr Heng noted, Singapore is in 23rd position

among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in part-time employment rates for mature workers aged 55 to 64, at 8.3 per cent.

He said: "This tells us that most Singapore companies have not yet learnt how to ably utilise and integrate part-time and other flexible work options into their mainstream manpower model or are, perhaps, also unwilling to do so."

Stories abound about unpleasant work practices, such as not paying salaries on time or neglecting overtime pay. In my own circle, an employee at a local hospital fears taking sick leave because those who exceed five days of it are forced to convert to a six-day work week, instead of a five-day work week.

An employee at a local bookstore told me that staff are expected to turn up for work 30 minutes early and stay late, but the hours are not counted towards their time sheets. Even toilet breaks earn "black looks". Not surprisingly, she wants to quit.

To be sure, local workers too can improve their work attitude and be more professional and proactive. But employers have also been able to rely on cheap foreign labour for too long. Having to compete for local workers will force some of them to offer better employment terms and career paths, and redesign work processes to be able to afford them.

In turn, competition for these better jobs should help workers raise their game, or they will risk being stuck at low-end posts. A tightening of the DRC can be an impetus to raise standards across the board.

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MPs offer ideas on how firms can adapt to changes

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

Polymakers would be better off joining forces with government agencies, unions and business leaders to solve problems instead of relying so much on legislation, Nominated MP Douglas Foo said in Parliament yesterday.

Mr Foo warned that an over-reliance on the law-making process – evident in recent calls for rules on wages, elderly care and flexible work arrangements – may not be the best way forward.

"I would like to urge this House to better support the efforts of tripartite collaboration and the Manpower Ministry's efforts to promote a strong culture of shared responsibility, rather than to adopt a legalistic and prescriptive approach," he said.

Mr Foo, who is president of the Singapore Manufacturing Federation, said the move to tighten the foreign worker quota for the service industry in 2020 and 2021 was the main concern out of all the Budget measures.

He warned MPs that it could drive firms out from Singapore or out of business altogether.

Mr Foo said the service industry is facing human resource constraints and is pressured by higher administrative and labour costs due to legislation amid global uncertainties and technological disruptions.

While bosses understand the policy reasons behind the Government's cuts to the quota and note its effect will be cushioned over two years, he said: "The fears and the difficulties for businesses have already begun."

Other MPs called for company



An automated storage and retrieval system at the NTUC FairPrice Hub warehouse in Benoi. Several MPs yesterday called for company owners to rethink how business is done beyond just adopting technology and automation. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

owners to rethink how business is done beyond just adopting technology and automation.

Ms Denise Phua (Jalan Besar GRC) said that unlike in construction and manufacturing, the service sector has not benefited in the same way from automation and digitalisation efforts.

Ms Jessica Tan (East Coast GRC) warned that another challenge for the service sector is the risk arising from the use of technology, as it can reduce the human touch, personal

service and customer experience.

But if companies in the service sector do not learn to rely less on foreign manpower, they will suffer when the sources of this labour pool dry up, added Ms Tan.

She acknowledged it is difficult but noted that doing more of the same is not the way to go: "It's also not about just innovating and applying technology and automation. It requires rethinking of our business and how work is done."

She cited coffee kiosk Kopi Ong,

which worked with a solutions provider to introduce a system that allows people to order customised coffee or tea via a messaging app and pick the drinks up when they are ready.

"It's not just about technology; it's not just about the way we do business; it's not just about people and skills; it's all of them," she said. "Therefore, the support that's in place needs to do that."

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Mr Douglas Foo warned that an over-reliance on the law-making process – evident in recent calls for rules on wages, elderly care and flexible work arrangements – may not be the best way forward.

No plans for speed trackers in heavy vehicles

Zhaki Abdullah

A nine-month trial on the use of speed-tracking devices in heavy vehicles found that while the devices are accurate, they are costly and susceptible to being tampered.

The devices have no significant advantages over the speed limiters currently required by law to be installed in heavy vehicles, said Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs Amrin Amin in Parliament yesterday.

As a result, the Traffic Police have decided not to make their use mandatory, he added.

Between December 2017 and August last year, the Traffic Police tested the use of three different types of speed-tracking devices on 30 vehicles, to see if they could complement or replace the speed limiters in heavy vehicles to curb speeding more effectively.

He was responding to questions from Mr Louis Ng (Nee Soon GRC), who asked about the findings from the trial, as well as whether there were plans to make the use of speed-tracking devices mandatory.

Mr Amrin noted the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had last week announced – as part of stricter penalties to deter reckless driving – that the composition fine for heavy vehicle drivers who exceed the speed limit by more than 31kmh will increase from \$200 to \$400 in April.

Mr Ng also asked if MHA would consider enhancing penalties for those who tamper with the speed limiters in heavy vehicles.

Mr Amrin replied that the ministry would study if the penalties needed to be increased, but noted that current penalties were "quite significant".

First offenders found to have tampered with speed limiters face a jail term of three months or a \$1,000 fine, or both.

"Tampering is something that is very difficult to detect and that's why we have quite serious punishments for it, but we will study what we can do better," said Mr Amrin.

He noted the number of speeding violations by heavy vehicles had declined from 1,737 in 2014 to 1,087 last year.

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Few trade bodies able to lead restructuring: Foo Mee Har

There are not enough trade associations and business chambers capable of leading their industries in transformation efforts, Ms Foo Mee Har (West Coast GRC) said in Parliament yesterday.

These industry federations are expected to play a pivotal role in economic restructuring through the 23 industry transformation maps.

But the task for these federations to make transformation more effective and immediate has proven to

be uneven across the various industries, said Ms Foo, who cited feedback she had received.

She added that few trade associations and chambers (TACs) were able to help their members access local and international networks.

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said last week that the Government will develop five-year road maps for selected TACs with strong leadership through the Local Enterprise and Association Development

programme. But Ms Foo, who is also chief executive of the Wealth Management Institute at the Nanyang Technological University, believes more should be done for other TACs as well.

"I think there is an urgent need to evaluate the partnership model and support structure of how government agencies, TACs, industry players, unions and training providers can come together to accelerate deep capability develop-

ment," she noted.

Mr Darryl David (Ang Mo Kio GRC) mooted the idea for trade promotion agency Enterprise Singapore to help firms identify overseas opportunities and assist them to develop capabilities through innovation centres and research institutes.

Nominated MP Douglas Foo, who is president of the Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF), said TACs can bring the business com-

munity in line with the Government's vision.

He urged TACs to break down individual walls and work with one another to pursue national objectives.

Such goals include fostering partnerships between local and foreign firms. The SMF, for instance, has signed more than 180 memoranda with TACs and government agencies here and abroad, he said.

Ng Jun Sen

Man linked to SkillsFuture scam jailed for 3½ years

Accused earned personal benefits totalling over \$108k for money-laundering offences

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A driver, who was linked to the SkillsFuture scam involving nearly \$40 million, dealt with almost \$1.1 million of the ill-gotten gains, a district court heard yesterday.

Roger Quek Si Guang, 33, earned personal benefits totalling more than \$108,000 for the money-laundering offences.

The scam has been described as the largest case of fraud perpetrated against a public institution in Singapore. SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) oversees the SkillsFuture initiative, which is aimed at promoting lifelong learning among Singaporeans.

Quek was jailed for 3½ years yesterday after pleading guilty to six counts of money laundering. Twenty-two other charges, mainly for similar offences, were considered during sentencing.

Nearly \$33,000 had been seized from his insurance policies and the money will be handed over to SSG.

District Judge Marvin Bay also ordered him to pay more than \$75,000 in compensation. He has to spend an additional two months behind bars if he is unable to pay the amount.

Under the SSG scheme, a Singapore business entity that sends its employees for skills training courses with registered training providers can apply to SSG for a subsidy, provided that certain conditions are met.

This subsidy comprises a portion of the total course fee paid by the business entity to the training provider. Depending on the claim

method used, subsidies are payable to either the training provider or applicant entity.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Cheng Yuxi said that Quek's older brother, Andy Quek Sze Leng, 38, was part of a syndicate that cheated SSG.

The group used nine shell companies to commit the offences. These entities submitted a total of 8,386 fraudulent course fee grant applications and a corresponding 8,391 claims to SSG between May and October 2017.

In September 2017, Quek realised that his jobless older brother had suddenly managed to obtain large sums of money. He later found out that his brother had obtained the cash fraudulently from the Government.

Quek obtained the ill-gotten gains from his older brother to buy items including insurance policies. He also withdrew \$99,000 on his brother's behalf and hid the money at home, among other things.

DPP Cheng said SSG later found out that the nine companies had made an "abnormally high number" of course fee grant claim submissions, and it alerted the police on Nov 1, 2017.

Quek was the second person linked to the scam to be dealt with in court. The first was Lee Chi Wai, 32, who was sentenced to five years and eight months' jail in November last year.

The cases involving Andy Quek and other alleged members of the syndicate are pending.

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Five years' jail for cheating 6 women of \$437k

Claiming to be an experienced trader, a jobless man cheated six women of almost \$437,000 after befriending them on dating platforms Match.com and Tinder.

Malaysian Peter Aw Boo Cheong, 47, was sentenced to five years' jail yesterday after pleading guilty to 17 cheating charges involving \$305,750.

Twenty-four similar charges linked to the remaining amount were considered during sentencing.

In 2016, Aw met a 50-year-old Singaporean woman on Tinder and they started a romantic relationship.

Aw, who is a Singapore permanent resident, called himself "Daniel" and claimed that he was an experienced silver trader.

He also told the woman about an "investment opportunity" which he said would reap high profits. The woman handed \$68,250 to him between May and June that year.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Tan Hsiao Tien said: "In the accused's dealings with the victim, he led her to believe that he was a credible and trustworthy person who had valuable information about investment, and would help her to invest in silver, in her best interests.

"In fact, the accused was never a trader and had never invested in foreign currencies and commodities. The accused did not use any of the monies for the purported investment."

Aw used a similar method to cheat five other women between August 2016 and July 2017.

Four of the victims were Singaporeans while the fifth was an Indonesian living in Singapore. They were between 39 and 48 years old.



Peter Aw Boo Cheong, 47, befriended his victims on online dating platforms. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW

Aw had also told these five women that he needed money for various reasons, such as to pay for medical expenses and car repairs.

However, all these reasons were false, said the DPP.

Aw used the money for his personal expenses, including settling his gambling debts.

The five women alerted the police between December 2016 and September 2017 when they realised that Aw had swindled them. He admitted in court on Nov 28 last year to cheating the five women.

His first victim realised she had been swindled after reading about the case in The Straits Times and made a police report two days later.

So far, Aw has made a restitution of \$500 to one of the women.

DPP Tan said that Aw has a history of committing similar offences and urged District Judge Chay Yuen Fatt to sentence him to at least five years' jail.

Aw was jailed for 14 months in 2013 after cheating four women of \$55,000. He had met them on dating websites.

For each count of cheating, he could have been jailed for up to 10 years and fined.

Shaffiq Alkhatib

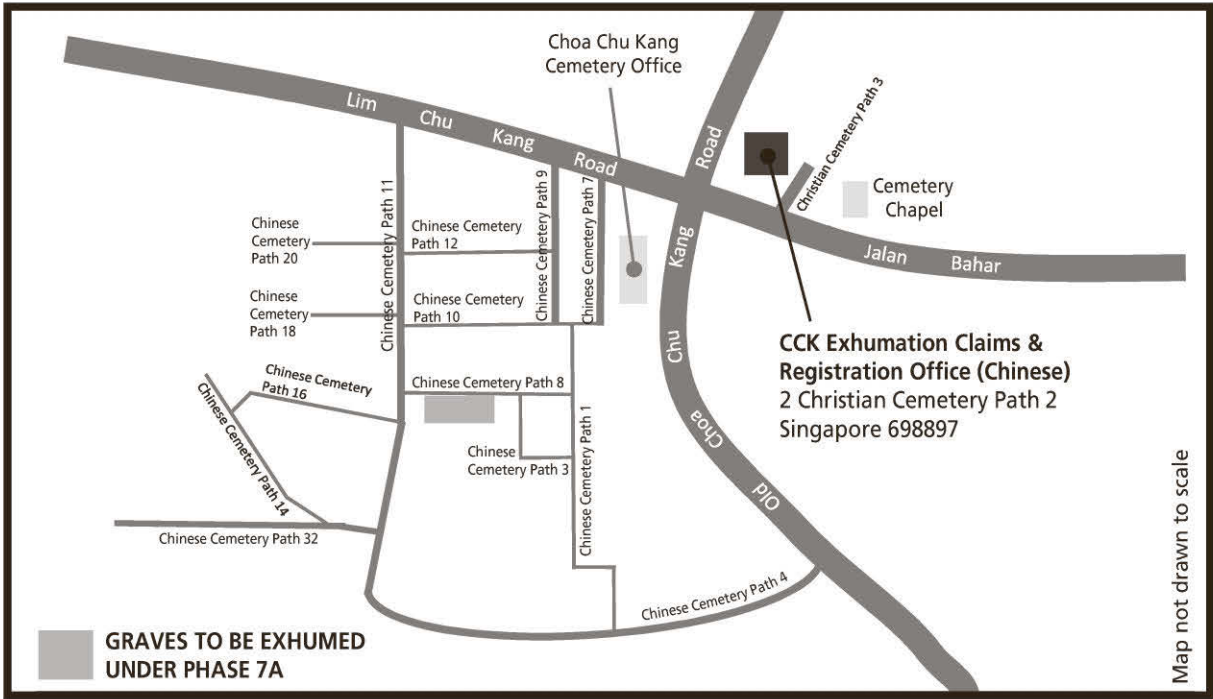


EXHUMATION OF GRAVES

NEW PHASE 7A FOR GRAVES LOCATED ALONG CHINESE CEMETERY PATH 8, BETWEEN CHINESE CEMETERY PATH 3 AND PATH 11 WITHIN THE CHOA CHU KANG CHINESE CEMETERY

On 18 July 2017, the Government announced that 45,500 Chinese graves at the Choa Chu Kang (CCK) Chinese Cemetery would be exhumed for future expansion of the Tengah Airbase. NEA has been undertaking the exhumation of the affected Chinese graves as part of the on-going phased exhumation of graves within the CCK Cemetery.

The affected graves under CCK Phase 7A exhumation programme are located along Chinese Cemetery Path 8, between Chinese Cemetery Path 3 and Path 11 (please refer to location map). Claims and registration for the affected graves within the CCK Chinese Cemetery is now open for registration by next-of-kin who wish to make a claim.



Registration of Claims

Next-of-kin of the affected graves under CCK Phase 7A exhumation programme can register their claims for the remains by completing the Claim Registration Form below, and posting or faxing it by **30 September 2020** to the following:

CCK Exhumation Claims and Registration Office
No. 2 Christian Cemetery Path 2, Singapore 698897

Operating hours:
Mondays - Fridays: 8:30am – 4:30pm Saturdays: 8:30am – 12:00pm
(excluding Sundays & Public Holidays)

E-mail: nea_cckexhumation@nea.gov.sg
Fax No.: (65) 6255-5461 Tel No.: (65) 6795-5511

Exhumation of graves will commence after registration of claims. Next-of-kin will be notified of the exhumation by NEA at a later date.

For online registration
(recommended) and
more details:



Exhumation, Cremation & Storage/Sea Burial of Cremated Remains by NEA

- Each grave will be exhumed individually by a contractor under the close supervision of NEA.
- Next-of-kin and relatives who wish to witness the exhumation may do so.
- Next-of-kin may opt for the cremated remains to be stored in a government columbarium or sent for sea burial by NEA's appointed contractor. For the former, the cremated remains from each affected claimed grave will be placed in an urn and installed in a standard niche allocated by NEA at one of the two government columbaria – CCK Columbarium at 51 Chinese Cemetery Path 4, Singapore 698932 or Mandai Columbarium at 300 Mandai Road, Singapore 779393 subject to availability – as per the decision of the next-of-kin. Should the next-of-kin wish to choose the location of the niche, they may do so upon fee payment of \$250 per niche location.
- The costs of exhumation, cremation and allocated standard niche with marble plaque at government crematorium and columbaria or sea burial of cremated remains by NEA's appointed contractor will be borne by NEA.
- A marble plaque, inscribed with the deceased's name and date of death, will be mounted on the niche. Claimants who wish to add a photograph of the deceased onto the marble plaque may do so at their own expense.

Claims for Remains of Other Family Members Buried Outside the Affected Block Within the CCK Chinese Cemetery

Next-of-kin can also make claims for the remains of other family members buried outside the affected block within the CCK Chinese Cemetery under the following conditions:

- The deceased buried outside the affected block must be related to the deceased buried at the affected block under one of the following relationships:
 - (i) Grandparents, (ii) Grandparents-in-law, (iii) Parents, (iv) Parents-in-law, (v) Spouse, (vi) Siblings, (vii) Siblings-in-law, (viii) Children, (ix) Children-in-law, (x) Grandchildren, (xi) Grandchildren-in-law
- An additional fee is payable to NEA's appointed exhumation contractor for each request to exhume a grave outside the affected block within the CCK Chinese Cemetery.

Private Arrangements

Next-of-kin who wish to make private arrangements to engage their own contractor to exhume the graves or store the cremated remains in a private columbarium or send the cremated remains for sea burial may do so at their own expense **before** the start of the exhumation works by NEA.

Next-of-kin are encouraged to submit the Claim Registration Form early. Once the claim is registered, NEA will schedule and notify the claimant on the date of exhumation at a later date.

(All unclaimed graves will be exhumed, and the remains cremated and kept for three years before sea burial)

27 February 2019 National Environment Agency

Please detach



CHOA CHU KANG CEMETERY EXHUMATION CLAIM REGISTRATION FORM – PHASE 7A

Environmental Public Health Division
CCK Exhumation Claims and Registration Office
No. 2 Christian Cemetery Path 2, Singapore 698897
Email: nea_cckexhumation@nea.gov.sg
Website: <https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/after-death/choa-chu-kang-exhumation-programme>
Tel: (65) 6795-5511 Fax: (65) 6255-5461

SECTION A: PARTICULARS OF GRAVE TO BE CLAIMED						
Name of Deceased/Alias			Cemetery Choa Chu Kang Chinese Cemetery			
Sex (Please tick) ☐ F ☐ M	Date of Death (DD/MM/YYYY)		Grave			
		Blk:	Division:	Plot:		
SECTION B: EXHUMATION OF GRAVE AND ARRANGEMENT FOR EXHUMED REMAINS						
1. I would like the exhumation to be carried out by (please tick one choice only): ☐ NEA's contractor* ☐ Private contractor engaged at my own cost						
2. I would like to have the exhumed remains (please tick one choice only): a) Cremated and stored in one of the following government columbarium* by NEA ☐ Choa Chu Kang Columbarium ☐ Mandai Columbarium b) Cremated and sent for sea burial by NEA* ☐ c) Cremated by NEA and stored elsewhere/sent for sea burial engaged at my own cost ☐ d) I do not wish to have the exhumed remains cremated and I will arrange to export the remains engaged at my own cost ☐						
SECTION C: PARTICULARS OF CLAIMANT						
Name (Please underline surname) Dr/Mr/Mrs/Mdm/Ms		Identification / Passport No.		Deceased to Claimant Relationship (e.g.: Father-Son, Husband-Wife etc.)		
Mailing Address		Tel: (Home)		(Office) (HP)		
Country		Email Address				
SECTION D: PARTICULARS OF SUPPLEMENTARY GRAVE(S)** NOT UNDER PHASE 7A EXHUMATION PROGRAMME TO BE CLAIMED						
Name of Deceased/Alias	Sex (F/M)	Age at Death	Date of Death (DD/MM/YYYY)	Grave		Relationship with Principal Deceased
				Blk	Plot	

* I agree that by opting for exhumation by NEA's appointed exhumation contractor, I will adhere strictly to NEA's schedule and timing for the exhumation in order not to affect the exhumation of other graves and the overall exhumation schedule.
* Subject to availability.
* Applicable only for exhumation by NEA's appointed exhumation contractor.
** An additional fee per grave is payable to NEA's appointed exhumation contractor for each request to exhume a grave not affected under the Phase 7A Exhumation Programme within the Choa Chu Kang Chinese Cemetery.

The particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge. I have carried out due diligence to ensure that there is no objection from my family members and relatives in regards to this claim. I hereby agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Agency against any legal suit, claims, damages or costs (including those asserted by third parties) arising directly or indirectly from the exhumation, cremation and storage of cremated remains/ sea burial of the above-mentioned deceased.

Name of Claimant Signature Date

CHECKING AGAINST A FAKE

I find it a bit strange that the polytechnics checked the copies with the originals. If the originals are already falsified, then they are just checking a false document against another false document.



DR INTAN AZURA MOKHTAR (Ang Mo Kio GRC) on the checks carried out by Temasek Polytechnic and Ngee Ann Polytechnic when hiring American Mikhy Farrera Brochez.



Since American Mikhy Farrera Brochez's forged professional documents were exposed, both Temasek Polytechnic and Ngee Ann Polytechnic have tightened their checks and now verify the foreign educational qualifications of all their staff. PHOTO: ARDEN BARNES FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

Practical limits to checks in hiring teaching staff

No system can completely keep out candidates who lie and cheat, says Low Yen Ling on polys' hiring of Brochez

Fabian Koh

While stringent checks are necessary when hiring potential employees, there are practical limits and no system is completely effective in spotting problematic individuals.

Ms Low Yen Ling, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education, said in Parliament yesterday: "While due diligence may be conducted thoroughly, there is unfortunately no system that is able to exhaustively keep out those who are out to lie and cheat."

She was responding to Dr Intan Azura Mokhtar (Ang Mo Kio GRC) on the due diligence carried out by Temasek Polytechnic and Ngee Ann Polytechnic when hiring American Mikhy Farrera Brochez.

Brochez, the man at the centre of Singapore's HIV Registry leak, had

used forged university degrees to get jobs at the two polytechnics between 2009 and 2012. Ms Low said before employing Brochez, both polytechnics did pre-employment checks by verifying copies of his educational certificates.

Such checks were "in line with the practice of the public sector, as well as many private-sector companies".

She also said he had shown a good grasp of the subject during interviews with the schools' management staff, including those with expertise in psychology.

Dr Intan noted: "I find it a bit strange that the polytechnics checked the copies with the originals. If the originals are already falsified, then they are just checking a false document against another false document."

She suggested a more robust process, in which the hiring institu-

tion checks back directly with the school that conferred the certificates. Ms Low replied that there is a limit to background checks when overseas institutions refuse to provide such confirmation, citing privacy reasons.

"We are also mindful of not going to the extreme, and risk losing out on valuable talents," she added.

Ms Low also told the House that a child psychology clinic, which Brochez was supposed to help set up in Temasek Polytechnic, "was never implemented, and Brochez was never involved in this initiative".

Since Brochez's forged professional documents were brought to light, both polytechnics have tightened their checks and now verify the foreign educational qualifications of all their staff.

"In addition, since 2014, all our five polytechnics conduct reference checks by checking with the candidate's or applicant's previous employers or referees indicated in the application," said Ms Low.

From February 2009 to January 2011, Brochez was a lecturer in psychology and early childhood subjects at Temasek Polytechnic until his contract expired. He then worked as an adjunct lecturer with the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Ngee Ann Polytechnic from June 2011 to April 2012.

Ms Low also pledged that her ministry "will spare no effort to work closely with our polytechnics, our universities and also our ITE (colleges), to strengthen our pre-employment checks and also ensure that the standard of academic rigour is kept by educators in our institutions".

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US court extends restraining order against Brochez

Charissa Yong
US Correspondent
In Lexington (Kentucky)

A US court has extended a temporary restraining order sought by Singapore's Ministry of Health (MOH) against Mikhy Farrera Brochez, the American at the centre of an HIV database leak in Singapore.

The initial order was granted on Feb 19, two days before he was arrested, and has been extended by 14 days from Feb 22 to March 8.

Brochez is being detained at the request of the United States government, which charged him last week with the unlawful possession of stolen identification documents.

Under the temporary restraining order, he may not post, refer to, discuss, upload or share any confidential, sensitive or private information that he got from the Singapore Government and is holding on to.

Any agent, representative, companion, friend or acquaintance of Brochez who possesses the information he obtained is also banned from disseminating it.

US District Judge Danny C. Reeves said any disclosure of information from the HIV Registry would cause immediate and irreparable injury to the individuals identified through the registry.

His written grounds for granting the extension were set out in court papers filed on Monday and seen by The Straits Times.

There was also good cause for the extension because the Singapore Government "had demonstrated a likelihood of success on the merits of its claims which (Brochez) had not yet answered", said the judge.

There would be little to no harm to Brochez, 34, if he were temporarily restrained from spreading the information. Doing so would, in fact, be in the public interest, the judge added.

The judge also wrote in earlier court documents that America's First Amendment, which protects freedom of speech, does not protect the unlawful disclosures of highly confidential patient information.

"Instead, confidential medical records, like the HIV Registry, must

be given protection from improper disclosure because the dissemination of this information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy," he added.

In the week before his arrest, Brochez had e-mailed the details of 13 HIV-positive individuals scheduled for a health check-up at Changi Prison Complex in March last year to government authorities and multiple media agencies.

Brochez lived in Singapore from 2008 and was jailed in 2017 for fraud and drug-related offences and lying to the Manpower Ministry about his HIV status to get an employment pass. He was released from prison last April and deported.

He was named by MOH last month as the culprit who leaked online the personal information of 14,200 individuals with HIV. He has denied the allegations.

He also sent government authorities and multiple media agencies e-mails warning that he would continue to embarrass the Singapore Government until it ended the HIV Registry and released his Singaporean partner Ler Teck Siang.

Ler, 37, was the head of MOH's National Public Health Unit from March 2012 to May 2013 and had access to the HIV Registry for his work.

Ler was convicted in 2016 of helping Brochez give false information to the authorities, and has also been charged under the Official Secrets Act. He is appealing against the charges.

The confidential information Brochez is barred from disclosing includes the HIV Registry, the prisons list, files related to hospital services and to other infectious diseases, as well as other information, such as e-mails, HIV studies and reports.

A court hearing has been set for today to determine whether he should continue to be remanded until the conclusion of the case involving the unlawful possession of stolen identification documents.

Brochez has also been separately charged with trespassing on his mother's property and is scheduled to appear in court to answer this charge next Monday.

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Ms Chiu Yu Cheng, 22, and Mr Patrick Cheong, 46, were awarded the Community Lifesaver Award by the Singapore Civil Defence Force yesterday for saving the lives of two people in separate incidents using cardiopulmonary resuscitation. They are registered as community first responders on SCDF's MyResponder mobile app. ST PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAUDHARY

Duo lauded for saving lives after responding to SCDF app's alerts

Joy Pang

Fears of another failed attempt crossed salesman Patrick Cheong's mind fleetingly when he still could not revive a cardiac arrest victim even after performing two rounds of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on Dec 28 last year.

This is because out of around 10 times that he had responded to calls for help and performed CPR on strangers, five have died despite his efforts. Still, Mr Cheong dug in and managed to revive the victim – a man in his 40s – on the third try.

For his latest effort, Mr Cheong, 46, was awarded the Community Lifesaver Award by the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) at its headquarters yesterday.

He is among 40,000 members of the public who have registered as community first responders (CFRs) on the SCDF's MyResponder mobile app. The application, which alerts CFRs of cardiac arrest victims in close proximity to them, has

been downloaded more than 100,000 times since its inception in 2015. Since then, about 2,250 CFRs have provided help.

Recounting the Dec 28 incident, Mr Cheong told The Straits Times he was at home with his three children when he received the app's alert of a victim collapsing two blocks away from his Bedok home.

When he rushed to the scene, Mr Cheong said, he saw a Chinese man aged around 40 lying at the staircase landing of Block 122, Bedok North Street 2.

Standing over the prone body was the man's father, who was in his 70s and looked visibly worried and panicky until Mr Cheong succeeded on the third CPR attempt.

A month later, Mr Cheong decided to visit their flat to check on how the victim was doing. When he was approaching their door, the victim's father rushed out and thanked him profusely for performing the CPR that saved his son's life.

"I'm surprised he could still remember that I had saved his son's

life," said Mr Cheong, chairman of the Community Emergency and Engagement Committee in Bedok.

Besides Mr Cheong, nursing student Chiu Yu Cheng, 22, also received the Community Lifesaver Award yesterday. She had responded to an alert on Nov 5 last year of a cardiac arrest victim at a jogging track in Pasir Ris Street 71.

Relying on skills she learnt in secondary school, she performed CPR on a man aged around 60 who had collapsed during exercise, while her boyfriend tried to find an automated external defibrillator.

Ms Chiu later followed paramedics to the hospital and left after she learnt that the man was recovering. The SCDF said the man has since recovered full mobility.

"I'm relieved to know that the man has made a full recovery," said Ms Chiu, who said it was the first time she had responded to an alert since she downloaded the MyResponder app two years ago.

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HSA issues alert on 2 unsafe products sold online

Goh Yan Han

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) issued an alert yesterday warning people not to buy or consume two unsafe products – Hickel and Solomon Island Soloco Traditional Candy (Soloco).

The HSA statement said very high levels of tadalafil, an undeclared potent medicinal ingredient used to treat erectile dysfunction, were detected in these products.

Inappropriate use of tadalafil without medical supervision will put consumers at increased risk of serious adverse effects such as low blood pressure, stroke, heart at-

tack, and painful and prolonged erections, it added.

HSA said all sellers and suppliers must stop selling the two products immediately. It advised consumers to stop taking the products as well.

The authority was alerted to Hickel by a journalist, while Soloco was detected by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority at the Woodlands Checkpoint when a 29-year-old woman tried to bring the product into Singapore.

Investigations found that both products were being sold on various local e-commerce and social media platforms, including Facebook.

Both products were advertised

online as "100% natural" and of "pure plant formula" with "no side effects", said HSA.

"They were also marketed in a manner to mislead consumers into thinking that they were candies, with exaggerated claims to improve cardiovascular and kidney health, diabetic conditions, vitality, fertility and immunity," said the statement.

In 2017, another illegal product, Candy B, was seized and tested by HSA, and found to contain tadalafil.

Hickel and Soloco were promoted to be "better than Candy B".

Both products were packaged individually in attractive wrappers inside tin containers or boxes.

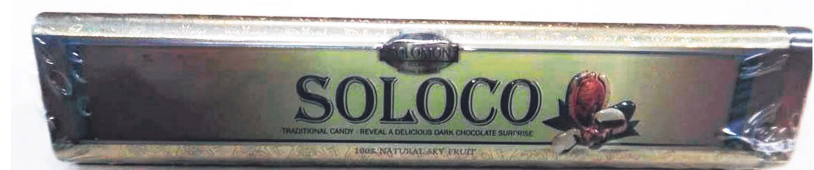
"Nutritional information" and food or quality certification marks like the United Kingdom's Food Standards Agency logo and the Good Manufacturing Practice logo were printed on the packaging.

Soloco's packaging also had a QR verification code for authenticity checks.

These characteristics were likely intended to mislead consumers into thinking that the products were safe and of good quality, said HSA.

The authority said it is working with the administrators of the local online platforms to remove the product listings.

It also advised consumers to be



Very high levels of tadalafil, an undeclared potent ingredient used to treat erectile dysfunction, were detected in Soloco (above) and Hickel. PHOTOS: HSA



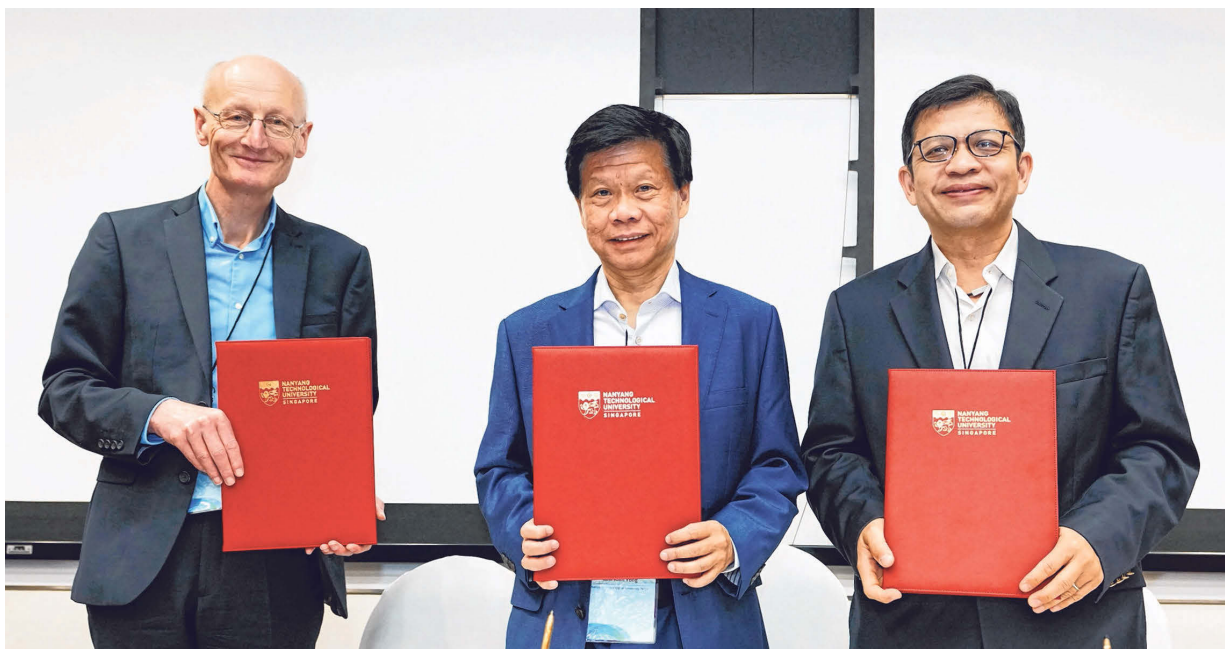
cautious when buying health products online, and to be wary of those that promise miraculous effects or carry exaggerated claims.

Anyone convicted of supplying il-

legal health products may be jailed for up to three years or fined a maximum of \$100,000, or both.

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National consortium formed to help industries battle spread of bacteria



(From left) Dr Mark Richardson, chief executive of Britain's National Biofilms Innovation Centre; Professor Lam Khin Yong, Nanyang Technological University's vice-president of research; and Mr George Loh, National Research Foundation's director of programmes, at the signing of memorandums of understanding on biofilm research yesterday.
PHOTO: SINGAPORE CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LIFE SCIENCES ENGINEERING

Shabana Begum

To combat the spread and persistence of bacteria that lead to health scares such as food poisoning and antimicrobial resistance, a cluster of micro-organisms called biofilms must be suppressed.

A biofilm is a thin, slimy and sticky layer that houses bacteria and other micro-organisms on any surface. As the harmful bacteria are located close to one another, biofilms can accelerate the spread of infections and diseases.

If biofilms are present in a food processing facility, contaminants will be easily transferred to food, leading to cases of food poisoning.

To assist industries battling biofilm-related issues, the National Research Foundation (NRF) yesterday launched a consortium that will translate biofilm research into products and technologies.

Products such as sensors to de-

tect biofilm presence and technology to disrupt bacterial colonisation are being developed to manage or get rid of biofilms, which are rampant on household surfaces, paint, water purification systems and medical implants.

The Singapore National Biofilm Consortium, which consists of institutes of higher learning, research institutions and industries, will be led by the Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences Engineering (SCELS), an institution hosted by Nanyang Technological University in partnership with the National University of Singapore.

NRF will provide funding of \$1.5 million over three years for the consortium, said an NRF spokesman.

Companies in the consortium will have access to knowledge and expertise from research institutes and SCELS.

Companies such as consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble and German optical systems manufac-

turer Carl Zeiss have indicated interest in joining the consortium.

Flotech Controls, which deals in industrial and scientific instruments, joined the consortium last month to manage the bacteria-ridden biofilm build-up in its agricultural pipes that had caused animals in some poultry farms in Malaysia to get infected.

Mr Lim Chee Wan, sales manager at Flotech Controls, said: "We initially wanted to eliminate the biofilm, but when we discussed with academics from the consortium, they gave us another perspective. They told us that there is probably no chance of eliminating the biofilm completely, and we have to manage and co-exist with it."

Consortium members can participate in workshops to facilitate industry-academia interactions, and apply for seed funding for technology development.

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Event space manager apologises to SDP, JTC

KCC Ventures says cancellation of SDP's event booking wrongly attributed to JTC inspection

Goh Yan Han

KCC Ventures (KCCV) has apologised for "being the cause of the misunderstanding" regarding the booking cancellation of an event by the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) last Saturday.

KCCV, which manages the SLV Hub events space in Eunos, said in a statement yesterday that it offered its apologies to both JTC Corpora-

tion (JTC) and SDP, and that "the fault lies solely" with KCCV.

Last Saturday, SDP chairman Paul Tambyah said it planned to hold the launch of its election campaign at the venue, but the political party was informed at noon on Friday that its booking had been cancelled as political events were not allowed there, even though the nature of the event had been made clear from the start.

The SDP said on its website that a "JTC inspection" was one of the reasons cited for the cancellation.

JTC said it had "no prior knowledge" of the event, and that it had informed the venue owner on Feb 8 of an inspection to take place on Feb 28, and not last Saturday.

The booking was then cancelled because KCCV had not obtained approval from the building landlord and the KCCV board, which came to know of the booking only on Friday. KCCV also said that it, through an e-mail from a company employee to the SDP, wrongly attributed the cancellation to a JTC inspection.

The planned inspection is part of ongoing investigations into unauthorised subletting activities, JTC said.

In its statement yesterday, KCCV explained that its staff and the SDP had negotiated the use of one of its spaces for the party's event, and the use of the space had been agreed upon and paid for.

KCCV had been aware of the intended purpose of the booking, which was for SDP's election campaign launch.

The booking was then cancelled because KCCV had not obtained approval from the building landlord and the KCCV board, which came to know of the booking only on Friday.

KCCV also said that it, through an e-mail from a company employee to the SDP, wrongly attributed the cancellation to a JTC inspection.

A KCCV spokesman told The Straits Times that despite the event being a politically related one, its staff had not sought approval.

"The event was not in the regular course of KCCV's business, as typical events that are hosted at the venue would include video and audio recordings, panel interviews, music and vocal training, and post-production work, among others," he added.

He said events not in line with KCCV's regular course of business "ought to be brought up to the building landlord and KCCV's board of directors".

The SLV Hub space is at 115 Eunos Avenue 3, which is a multi-storey complex known as Zhaolim Building.

The statement said the KCCV employee and manager have been counselled. Guidelines and controls have also been put in place to ensure that a similar situation does not happen again.

KCCV has contacted the SDP to apologise and will be refunding the party's full payment.

It said it has offered to pay the difference between the rental that the SDP had to pay at an alternative venue and the original rental cost for KCCV's premises, as well as the cancellation fee of the party's caterer.

The SDP said on its website yesterday that it accepted KCCV's apology and considered the matter closed.

The party also confirmed that KCCV compensated it for the expenses incurred as a result of the change in venue.

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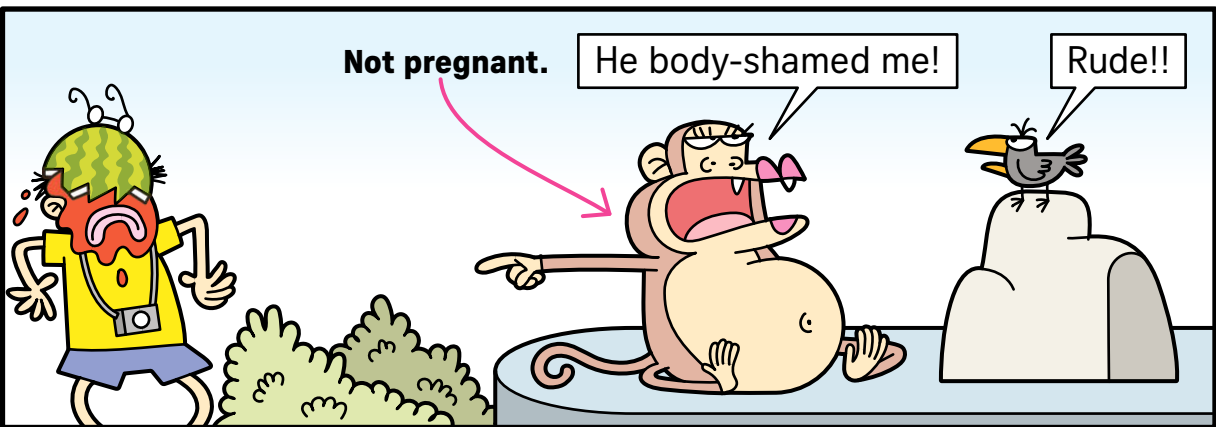
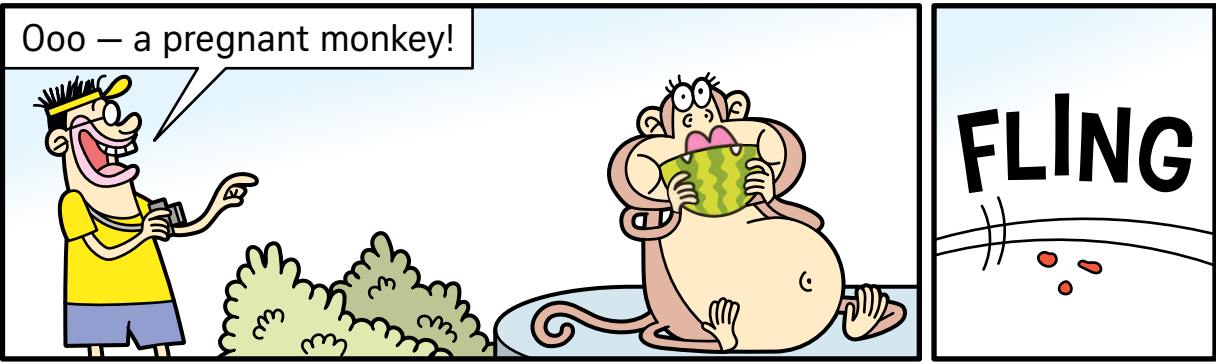
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FORUM

deedhan's TAKE

Baby boom in Singapore's wildlife parks



Regulating school-bus fares not the answer

The issue of school-bus fares is only part of a larger systemic problem (Parents call for regulation of school-bus fares, services, Feb 22). The regulation of bus fares on its own will not end in a happy and affordable experience for parents and bus operators. School-bus operators are running a business, and have to maximise the use of their vehicles in order to keep fees lower. What could end up happening is that bus operators have to serve more than one school during the

day, and may take longer routes to fill up the bus and make it viable. This would mean picking children up very early and dropping them off long before the start of school assembly, so they can move on to the next school or route. This could come at the cost of the child's health, as he may get less sleep and go long hours without eating anything substantial. Alternative solutions could include getting pre-schools to start later in the day, so bus operators would have time to ferry primary

and secondary school children before they start their pre-school routes. Similarly, we could get either primary or secondary schools to start earlier than the other, so a bus would have time to ferry students to both. Any solution is unlikely to meet everyone's needs, but at the very least we can align the solutions to an overarching outcome - healthier and more attentive children in school. **Kishor Bhagwat**

Develop effective strategy to retain pre-school teachers

The increase in mid-career entrants in the pre-school sector is good news (Pre-school sector draws more mid-career entrants, Feb 19). We need to understand the entry motivations of these mid-career entrants in order to ensure retention of employees and the long-term sustainability of the pre-school sector. Enrolling in a diploma programme is just the beginning of a journey. Mid-career entrants bring with them prior work knowledge and experience that may add value to a child's classroom experience. Of course, they should also demonstrate professionalism, show the right attitude as well as skill when caring for children and always have children's best interests at heart. Educating and caring for children require more than just possessing

the necessary qualifications. One must commit "heart, mind and hand" too. Children need teachers with heart to engage them. Teachers need the mind to observe, reflect and document children's development with the intention to plan, extend and challenge their learning and development. And creative and resourceful hands will serve to create purposeful activities and tasks for children as part of a regular stimulating learning environment. I also believe that the misconception that a pre-school teacher is merely "a nanny or a caregiver" is not the only point of contention keeping people from entering the pre-school sector. Other potential issues include salary, staff to child ratio, work environment, workload and the

appropriate recognition and classification of pre-school teachers as professionals equivalent to primary school teachers, instead of classifying them under a skills-based category. And while men are in the minority when it comes to primary school teachers or nurses, how is it that the disparity is so huge in the pre-school sector, where less than 1 per cent of teachers are male? Could it be the effects of stigma and scrutiny, as well as the lack of professional satisfaction in managing young children? We should carry out a survey to find out more. Ultimately, attracting new entrants is only the beginning of a journey to develop working strategies for the effective long-term retention of pre-school teachers. **Rebecca Chan (Dr)**

Allow video calls to emergency number

The response to 17,954 non-emergency and false-alarm calls to emergency number 995 represents the diversion of precious resources away from genuine emergency cases, disrupting the Singapore Civil Defence Force's (SCDF) core duty of saving lives (SCDF beefing up response to life-threatening emergencies, Feb 23).

However, some of these callers may simply be unsure whether their request for an ambulance is necessary. To minimise such calls, people should be allowed to make video calls to 995, so the caller can show the SCDF operator live pictures of the scene, including, for example, the victim's wounds. This will not only allow the

operator to advise callers on whether the situation warrants an ambulance, but will also enable him to guide the caller on how to handle an emergency situation while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. With this appropriate use of technology, the SCDF can ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. **Sim Mong Seng**

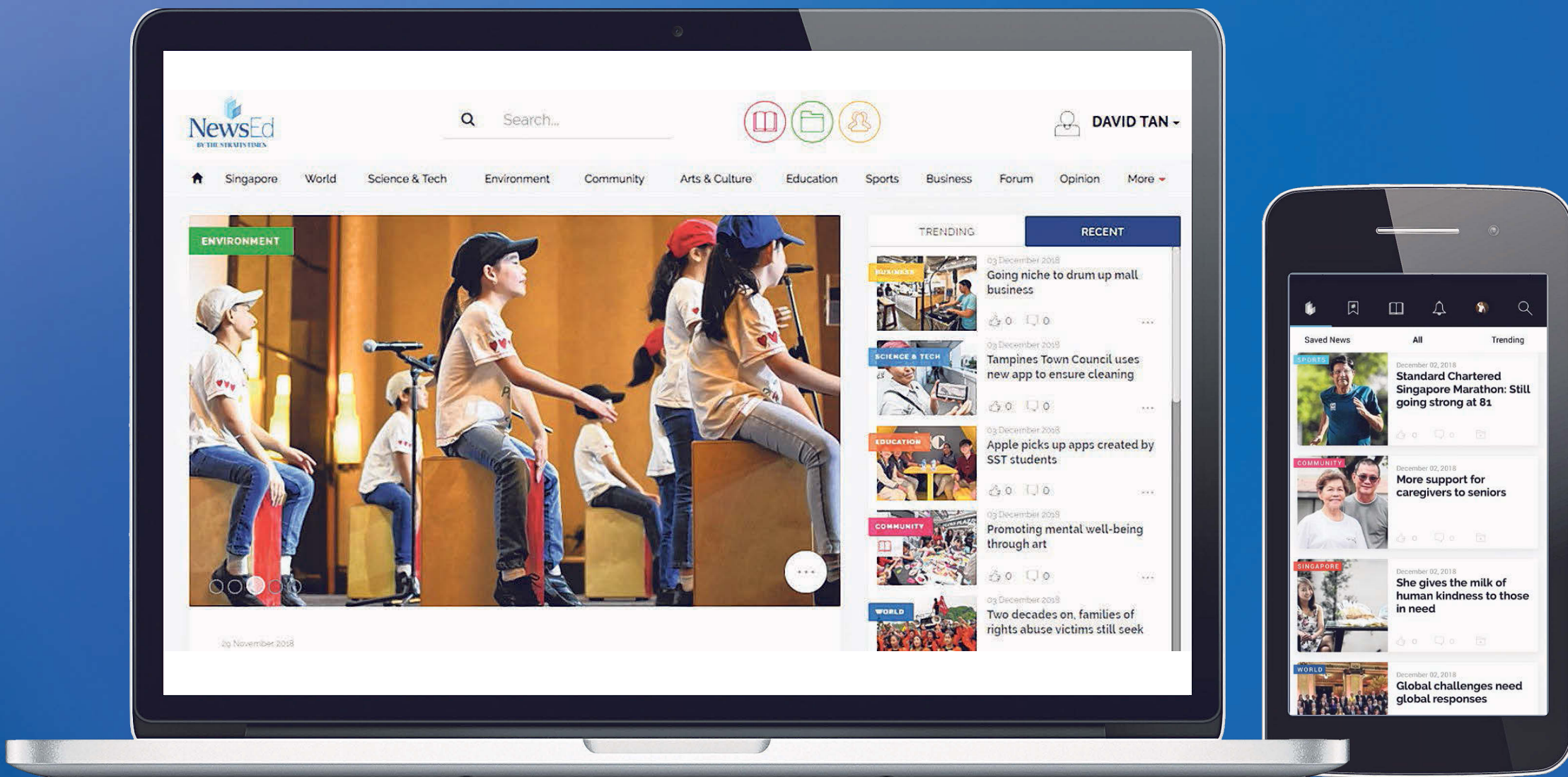
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Move away from individual to collective caregiving

The new Caregiver Support Action Plan, which strengthens government support for senior caregiving (Concerted caring for caregivers, Feb 21), sidesteps two fundamental and related challenges of caregiving in Singapore.

First, the over-reliance on individual caregivers – either family members who have to make personal sacrifices and who are subject to physical and psychological stress, or foreign domestic workers who are often overstretched in the household and who receive remuneration that is not commensurate with their work and living conditions.

Second, the urgent need to strengthen communities and institutions for caregiving, emphasising not only the self-reliance of individual or family-based systems, but also the

further professionalisation of the sector and improvements for productivity gains.

The continued reliance on individual caregivers is unlikely to be sustainable in Singapore.

The expected fall of the country's old-age support ratio from 4.8 last year to 2.1 in 2030 means fewer family members for each older Singaporean.

And it is well-established that the experience of senior caregiving can be isolating and depressing.

In the even longer term, these senior caregivers – who are unable to accrue substantial savings or work experience – might end up requiring caregiving themselves, further perpetuating an unhealthy cycle.

What is more urgently needed is a move away from individual to collective caregiving.

Grants, respite options and other support initiatives are useful in the short term, but are not the answer to Singapore's ageing population.

For a start, Singapore would benefit from a more comprehensive understanding of existing caregiving patterns in the country, such as the preferred caregiving practices across time and the collective state of communities and institutions for caregiving.

How do they work together? Are options diverse, accessible, and affordable? And are families adequately informed to consider and choose from different caregiving options?

Ultimately, the question for all Singaporeans is: What type of caregiving do I want for myself, and what would that look like?

Kwan Jin Yao

Expand benefits of PAssion Silver Card

Among the perks of the Merdeka Generation Package is a \$100 top-up for the PAssion Silver Card, which can be utilised for activities at the community clubs.

Currently, we already have the ActiveSG credit that serves a similar purpose.

To avoid duplication, I propose that the benefits of the PAssion Silver Card be extended to the following:

- Payment of fees for health seminars and screenings, as well as to watch competitive sporting matches.
- Payment of fees for qigong, taiji

and other non-competitive mass exercises.

- Purchase of health supplements and accessories, such as skipping ropes and yoga mats, for exercising at home, as many seniors may find it hard to go to the gym or public swimming pools.
- Buying necessary items to aid in daily life for the disabled, handicapped or those with special needs.

This will allow the card to be better utilised by members of the Merdeka Generation.

Patrick Tan Keong Boon

WRITE IN: Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit the letters. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg. Readers can also respond to letters via Facebook and Twitter.

Technology cannot replace humans in security industry

Mr Liu Fook Thim's suggestion (Eliminate guards to transform security industry, Feb 25) fails to recognise the effort and sacrifices made by private security personnel to provide the public with a first line of defence without having to

call upon the police.

The presence of security guards at shopping malls, schools and condominiums, for example, is crucial in preventing crimes such as illegal parking, theft and sabotage.

Guards also play an

important role during the fire evacuation process.

The presence of closed-circuit television cameras alone may also not be enough to deter offences such as the tailgating of condominium residents through side entrances.

Despite having many such cameras, major shopping malls still need in-house detectives to nab shoplifters.

We are still a long way from a total reliance on robots and technology.

During the Trump-Kim summit

last year, thousands of police and security personnel were mobilised to ensure the event ran smoothly.

A total reliance on robots and technology then would have been a huge gamble.

Syed Abdul Muneef Syed Muhammad

Clients need to look at security outcomes to transform industry

Mr Liu Fook Thim is right in pointing out that the onus of buying the correct private security services lies with clients (Eliminate guards to transform security industry, Feb 25).

This process starts with the clients determining the security outcomes they wish to achieve, and this must be done by making a professional security, risk and threat assessment.

The correct technologies should then be installed before the manpower solutions are worked out.

Security officers remain essential as the initial response force or trigger for any security incident.

Sadly, most buyers today continue to procure security services by the number of security officers they can get at the

cheapest rate, and security technology solutions are separately procured.

This approach greatly reduces the effectiveness of a man-machine combination.

The Union of Security Employees and the Security Association Singapore believe this has to change.

It would be wrong to assume that we take a narrow view of this

matter in order to protect our own interests. We are focused on helping to transform the industry.

We have been involved in the Security Industry Transformation Map since its conception and have organised eight buyers' seminars and technology showcases thus far.

Buyers broadly fall into four segments: public, commercial, industrial and residential.

The public sector has set for itself a timeline to procure security services based on outcomes by next year.

Buyers from the other segments, especially the residential segment, need to do this also.

Only then will we be able to raise the overall security protection for Singaporeans, in support of the effective work our law enforcement forces are doing.

Steve Tan
Executive Secretary
Union of Security Employees

Defer PMD sharing start-ups' licence applications

The actions of the two personal mobility device (PMD) sharing start-ups, which illegally made their devices available for hire in public places, show a complete disregard for the law (Two start-ups in trouble for illegally offering shared PMDs, Feb 22).

Given these firms' conduct while awaiting approval for a licence, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) should delay consideration of their applications until they have clearly demonstrated to LTA and the public that they can and will comply with all the licensing conditions.

LTA may wish to keep in mind that once the licences are granted, monitoring of violations and enforcement will become more tedious as more PMDs are deployed.

Will these firms keep strictly to the number of PMDs they are licensed to operate?

Will they promptly remove indiscriminately parked or abandoned PMDs?

And will they promptly investigate accidents caused by their users?

Given their violation of LTA regulations even before their licences were approved, these are legitimate questions that these two firms should address in their applications to LTA.

Andrew Seow Chwee Guan

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A senior journalist at The Straits Times, **Shafali Rekhi** is also an editor at Asia News Network, an alliance of 23 news media. She is one of the key anchors in ST's initiatives to fight fake news.

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Factory output contracts for first time in a year

January's 3.1% drop due to weaker electronics, precision engineering sectors as well as trade tensions

Sue-Ann Tan

Weaker performances by the electronics and precision engineering sectors sent manufacturing output down last month – the first year-on-year fall since December 2017.

Last month's reading was on a par with the dip predicted by economists in a Bloomberg poll.

United Overseas Bank economist Barnabas Gan said the 3.1 per cent drop might be partly due to the high base effect in January last year, when manufacturing output grew 18.4 per cent year on year.

Trade tensions also played a role in the manufacturing slowdown.

"The ongoing uncertainties in US-Sino trade tensions and the fading technology boom would likely persist into the first quarter of the year," Mr Gan said.

He added that these external factors appear to have weighed on both manufacturing and trade activities in key Asian economies.

If biomedical manufacturing was excluded, output fell by a sharper 5.9 per cent last month, said the Economic Development Board (EDB) yesterday.

HSBC chief Asean economist Joseph Incalcaterra said: "Leading indicators such as worldwide semiconductor billings and business expectations for the Singapore manufacturing sector point to sustained industrial production weakness over the short term."

"That said, the recent stabilisation in commodity prices should provide some support for oil-related sectors such as the petrochemical industry, and good news from US-China trade negotiations may reduce additional downside trade risks."

Maybank Kim Eng economist Lee Ju Ye agreed: "We think manufacturing may register near zero growth in 2019, following two years of robust growth."

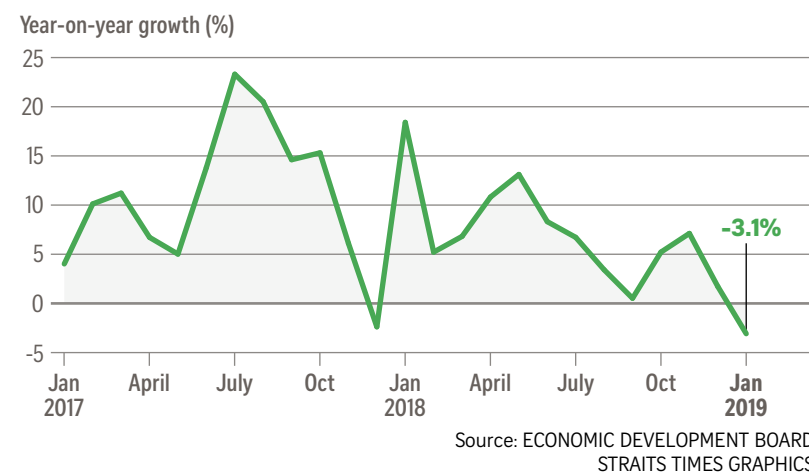
Last month's output declined despite the transport engineering sector posting growth of 20.2 per cent.

The marine and offshore engineering segment expanded 26.9 per cent due to a higher level of work done in offshore projects and shipbuilding and repairing, the EDB noted.



General manufacturing saw a rise of 3.2 per cent year on year, with the miscellaneous industries segment up 5.8 per cent. LIANHE ZAOBAO FILE PHOTO

Manufacturing output



Aerospace also grew, expanding 17.4 per cent on the back of more repair and maintenance activities from commercial airlines.

Biomed manufacturing lifted output as well, rising 10 per cent year on year, while pharmaceuticals expanded 13.5 per cent, driven by higher production of active ingredients and biological products.

Sustained export demand helped boost medical technology production by 1.5 per cent.

The chemicals industry saw an uptick as well, up 2 per cent compared with last year.

But the electronics cluster's output fell 13.7 per cent last month.

Precision engineering also fell, declining 15.7 per cent, with the machinery and systems segment falling by 20.8 per cent due to lower production of semiconductor equipment.

The precision modules and components segment dipped 7.4 per cent, pulled down by reduced output of optical instruments and dies, moulds, tools, jigs and fixtures.

General manufacturing registered a rise of 3.2 per cent year on year, with the miscellaneous industries segment growing 5.8 per cent, propelled by higher production of batteries and structural metal products.

Festive demand boosted output in the food, beverages and tobacco segment by 4.6 per cent, but printing fell 11.5 per cent.

Manufacturing production rose 0.9 per cent in January on a seasonally adjusted month-on-month basis, but dipped 0.4 per cent with the more volatile biomedical manufacturing sector stripped out.

Ms Lee noted: "2019 will be a year of two halves. We are pencilling a brief manufacturing downturn in the first half, including a negative first quarter. The second half may see some rebound in manufacturing after a trade deal."

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The House of Tan Teng Niah was built in 1900, and is believed to be the last remaining Chinese villa in Little India. The property is now used for commercial purposes but was famed as a residence in the past. It is one of the landmarks listed in the National Heritage Board's Little India Heritage Trail. PHOTO: JLL

Little India heritage site goes up for tender

A distinctive conserved two-storey bungalow in Little India known by many as the House of Tan Teng Niah is up for tender.

The property is now used for commercial purposes but was famed as a residence in the past. It is considered a heritage landmark.

The eight-room villa was built in 1900, purportedly for the wife of prominent businessman Tan Teng Niah, who owned several confectionery factories in Serangoon Road and a rubber smoke house in Kerbau Road.

It is believed to be the last remain-

ing Chinese villa in Little India.

The 25,865 sq ft plot near Little India MRT station and directly opposite Tekka Market is mainly zoned for commercial use.

Mr Karamjit Singh, senior consultant at marketing agent JLL, said in a statement yesterday that the shop lots and buildings are not strata-titled, so the entire portfolio is to be sold in its entirety.

"We understand that the asset was valued at \$70.6 million late last year," added Mr Singh.

"To our knowledge, this could well be one of the largest plots of

privately held commercial land in the vicinity of the Little India MRT station. An opportunity to acquire an asset of this unique nature is rare to come by."

The villa is one of the landmarks listed in the National Heritage Board's Little India Heritage Trail.

It is described as a hybrid of southern Chinese and European architectural influences.

The villa was restored and conserved in the 1980s as "a reminder of an era when small Chinese businesses co-existed and flourished alongside the Indian-dominated

cattle-trade industry for which the Little India area was once known", said JLL.

Mr Singh said the "income-generating portfolio" may appeal to investors, individuals of high net worth or family offices, for its historical value.

Three other buildings are within the site: a pair of adjoining two-storey heritage shophouses at 41/43 Kerbau Road, a single-storey shop fronting Buffalo Road, and a single-level retail building at 672 Chandler Road. The lettable space across all four buildings is almost fully leased.

The combined gross floor area of all the buildings is about 16,800 sq ft.

As the land and buildings are non-residential, additional buyer's stamp duty will not apply to the purchase.

The tender closes at 2.30pm on April 2.

StanChart eyes \$945m in cost cuts by 2021

It will also restructure ops in 'low-returning' markets, as part of 3-year turnaround plan

HONG KONG • Standard Chartered chief executive Bill Winters announced plans yesterday to reduce costs and indicated he will restructure operations in markets, including India and South Korea, as part of a long-awaited plan to turn around the lender.

The bank, whose operations span Asia, the Middle East and Africa, is aiming to cut US\$700 million (\$945 million) in costs as part of a new three-year plan that the emerging markets-focused lender hopes will soothe investor concerns over its lacklustre returns.

It did not say if the cuts would come from reduced headcount.

Mr Winters has been seeking to convince investors that he can revive longer-term earnings growth and generate an acceptable level of profitability while cutting costs.

He has spent much of his tenure cleaning up the balance sheet and culture of the London-based firm, which had been saddled with bad loans.

Among the targets announced by the bank:

- Return on tangible equity of at least 10 per cent by 2021;
- Income growth target of 5 per cent to 7 per cent, focusing on controlling risk;
- Cost growth expected to remain below the rate of inflation;

- Target Common Equity Tier 1 ratio range of between 13 per cent and 14 per cent;
- Ordinary dividend per share has the potential to double by 2021;
- Plan to distribute to shareholders surplus capital not deployed to fund additional growth.

Earlier, Standard Chartered said underlying pre-tax profit last year was US\$3.86 billion, compared with a US\$3.98 billion consensus forecast compiled by the bank.

Full-year underlying operating income was US\$14.97 billion, said the bank, compared with forecasts of US\$15.02 billion.

The firm's private banking unit reported an underlying pre-tax loss of US\$14 million last year, compared with a loss of US\$1 million in the previous year.

Standard Chartered plans to "eliminate residual drags on returns from low-returning markets", including India, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia, it said.

The lender said last week it is taking a US\$900 million charge for the fourth quarter to cover potential US and UK penalties, including a £102 million (\$518 million) fine from the British financial regulator related to its financial crime controls. BLOOMBERG

Kentish Green, St Thomas Ville seeking to sell en bloc again

More collective sales are in the works as two more deals head to market after their owners missed out on earlier attempts.

Kentish Green condominium has been again put up for collective sale with a \$200 million reserve price – a reduction from the previous asking price of \$230 million.

And St Thomas Ville is also up for collective sale again. It is eyeing bids of at least \$58 million – no change from an earlier attempt to go en bloc.

Located in St Thomas Walk near River Valley Road, the 23-unit freehold District 9 property was up for sale last August, but the tender was called off due to delays in verification of technical details that stretched into the year-end holiday season.

The 122-unit Kentish Green in Oxford Road, off Rangoon Road, has an area of 59,165 sq ft, and 76 years left on its lease.

The buyer will have to pay a premium to top up the lease to a fresh 99 years – estimated at about \$20 million, subject to further assessment and increase in the plot ratio.

The \$200 million reserve price would deliver each owner a net amount of between \$1.5 million and \$1.8 million.

The collective sale committee was told by the Urban Redevelopment Authority that it had potential permissions to increase development parameters. These include an increase of the plot ratio from 2.8 to 3, an increase in height from six storeys to potentially 28, and an added commercial component of



The \$200 million reserve price for Kentish Green would deliver each owner a net amount of between \$1.5 million and \$1.8 million. PHOTO: ERA

0.3 per cent of the gross floor area.

The site is near Farrer Park MRT station and adjacent to an empty plot of land where the Russian Cultural Centre is slated to be built. The building will also house the Russian Orthodox Church.

The tender closes at 4pm on March 28.

The St Thomas Ville collective sale committee decided on a new launch after getting more than 80 per cent of owners' consent.

The \$58 million reserve price works out to \$1,816 per sq ft per plot ratio (psf ppr), before factoring in any bonus balcony.

There will be no development

charge payable for site intensification due to a high development baseline. This includes a bonus gross floor area of up to 10 per cent. It has a gross plot ratio of 2.8 and an allowable height of up to 36 storeys.

The site is not subject to a pre-application feasibility study by the Land Transport Authority, and the guidelines on minimum average size of 85 sq m are also not applicable as it is within the central area.

The condo is near Great World City, Orchard Road and schools such as River Valley Primary School and Chatsworth International. The tender closes at 3pm on March 27.

INVEST IN JAPAN'S FASTEST GROWING CITY – FUKUOKA

Largest residential redevelopment project of the century in Fukuoka

The Parkhouse
ザパークハウス 福岡タワーズ
FUKUOKA TOWERS WEST

Next to one of the largest shopping malls in Fukuoka, Mark IS

Walking distance to seaside Momochi Beach

TENJIN STATION

Heart of Fukuoka's shopping malls, major banks and offices

11 mins by car

HAKATA STATION

Hakata commercial hub

10 mins by car

FUKUOKA AIRPORT

Airport for domestic and international flights

12 mins by car

EXHIBITION

2 & 3 March 2019 • 11am - 7pm
Seminar: 2pm (both days)

Topic: Find out why start-ups are looking to set up in Fukuoka and what this means to the residential market there

St Regis Hotel, Diplomat Room
29 Tanglin Road Singapore 247911

Prices for 1-BR unit
SGD 412,869

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Widya Lesta M +65 8282 3473 CEA Reg No. R016997A	Marilyn Tan M +65 8812 9298 CEA Reg No. R031122J	Clarice Lau M +65 8586 1987 CEA Reg No. R058170H
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JLL

UNIQUE COMMERCIAL SITE IN LITTLE INDIA WITH HERITAGE BUNGALOW AND SHOPS

SITE OF FORMER HOUSE OF TAN TENG NIAH

- Land area 25,864 sf; Approx. GFA 16,800 sf
- LH99 yrs; Zoned 'Commercial' & 'Open Space'
- Comprises 4 properties for commercial uses
- Within Little India Conservation Area
- <100 m to Little India MRT, opp Tekka Market

FOR SALE BY TENDER
Closing: 2 April 2019 (Tues), 2.30pm

Pamela Kow CEA Reg No. R001328I 9223 4822	Karamjit Singh CEA Reg No. R001325D 9681 0111
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Temasek leads \$115m funding round for medical firm

Medical start-up Gracell Biotechnologies has raised US\$85 million (\$115 million) through a series B round led by investment firm Temasek.

Lilly Asia Ventures, Kington Capital, King Star Capital and Chengdu Miaoji also took part in the financing.

The firm aims to develop low-cost, easy-to-use cellular gene therapies for cancer patients, said Gracell founder, chairman and chief executive William Cao.

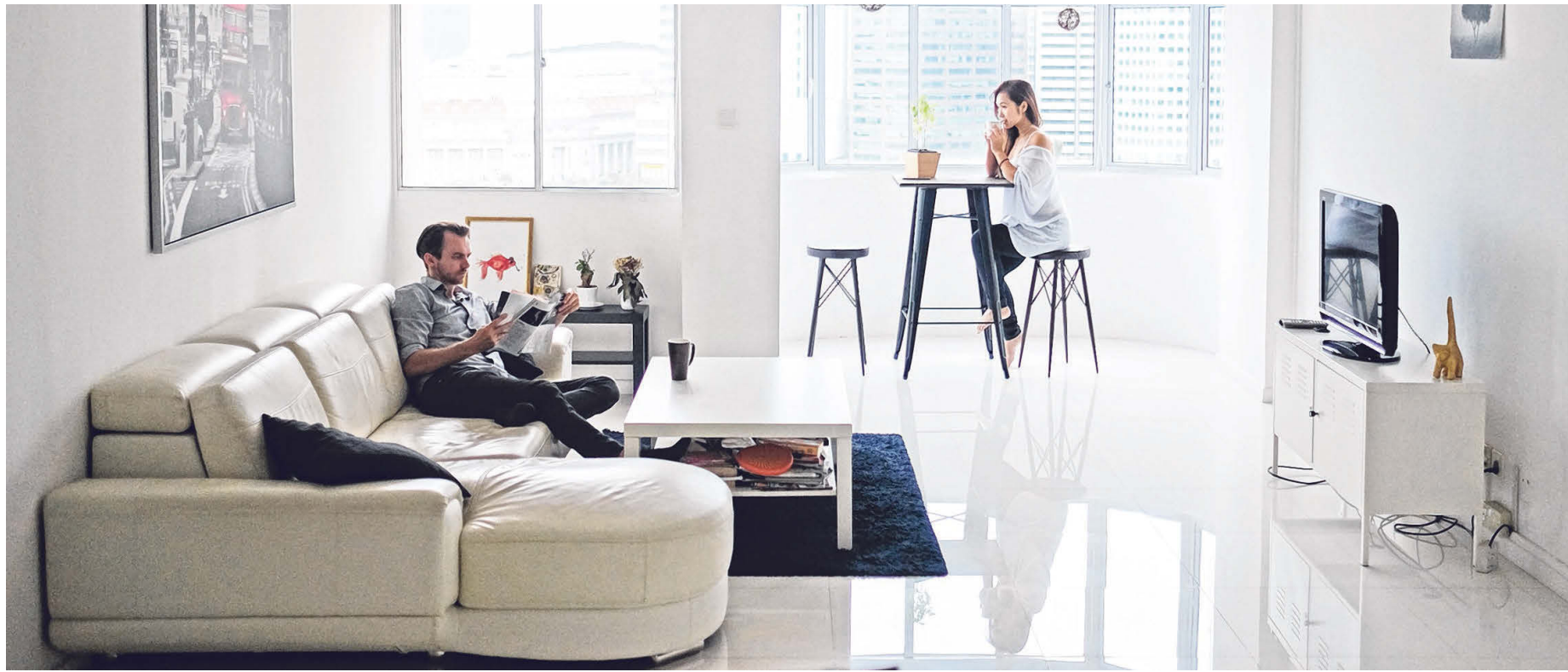
Gracell, which is based in Suzhou, China, focuses its technology on developing modified immune cells called T-cells. It will use the financing proceeds to enter clinical trials for several of its next-generation candidates.

The firm has completed pre-clinical development of a series of low-cost therapy products, and entered Institutional Review Board (IRB) clinical research.

Gracell said it expects to develop a data package from its clinical IRB studies, and advance several products to Investigational New Drug filings and clinical trials in the near future.

Said Dr Cao: "Immune cell gene therapy is expected to become a pillar of modern medicine, but the industry is still in its infancy. Gracell has a leading technology platform and a mission-driven team that is committed to solving industry-wide cellular gene therapy technical difficulties."

Gracell, which is based in Suzhou, China, focuses its technology on developing modified immune cells called T-cells.



Singapore-based co-living company Hmlet offers a community for people who are moving to a new city or have left familiar surroundings, so they can quickly make new connections. It has around 15 locations across Singapore and Hong Kong. PHOTO: HMLET

SME Spotlight

Co-living firm Hmlet expanding to Australia

It will open two properties in Sydney, with plans to venture into Melbourne and Brisbane

Singapore-based co-living company Hmlet will enter the Australian market next month.

It will open two co-living properties in the inner-city Sydney suburbs of Newtown and Marrickville with plans to expand to Melbourne and Brisbane.

Hmlet @ Newtown, which is among the first purpose-built co-living properties in Australia, will accommodate 20 members and feature a co-working space, communal living and kitchen spaces, the firm said.

Hmlet @ Marrickville, one of the

largest built-to-rent projects in Sydney's inner-west, will accommodate around 70 members, it added.

Co-founder Yoan Kamalski said: "With the growing demand for more flexible, community-based options of living in urban cities such as Sydney, Australia felt like the next natural move for us."

Hmlet offers a community for people who are moving to a new city or have left familiar surroundings, so they can quickly make new connections.

Australia is the third-most popu-

lar destination for international students and young professionals starting their careers, Hmlet said.

"With over 1.2 million people aged 20 to 35 years old, individuals living in Australia's major cities are currently spending at least 30 per cent of their monthly take-home on rent," it said in a statement.

"Millennials currently account for 29 per cent of Australia's population and are set to be 50 per cent of the workforce by 2020."

It noted that a recent survey found 48 per cent of millennials in Australia said they would rent for longer to be closer to the things they need.

Hmlet said it is the largest co-living operator in Singapore, having doubled its number of members in the previous six months.

It has around 15 locations across Singapore and Hong Kong.

It hopes the push into Australia will allow it to quadruple its member numbers to more than 2,400 across

the Asia-Pacific by the year end.

Hmlet raised US\$6.5 million (\$\$8.8 million) in a Series A funding round led by Sequoia India last November.

Freehold Industrial Opportunity with Dormitory Approval



- Site Area: 5,791 sq ft approx.
- Built-Up Area: 16,943 sq ft approx.
- Master Plan 2014: Industrial (B1) with GPR 2.5
- Located along Genting Road within close proximity to MacPherson Road
- Planning permission granted for secondary workers' dormitory

Expression of Interest closes on 13 March 2019, 3pm

For enquiries, kindly contact
Gerald Quek 9047 7619
(CEA Reg No R002959B)

James Wong 9113 3113
(CEA Reg No R017407Z)

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AN ENTERPRISE SINGAPORE SPECIAL THE WEDDING GALLERY

Homegrown bridal studio engages the right support to go global

A strong marriage requires us to work through challenges together with the right partner.

A powerhouse in the local wedding industry, Fatimah Mohsin, 43, understands this applies especially so in business.

The Wedding Gallery, which Fatimah founded in 2008, is a leading bridal and make-up studio brand that has worked with celebrities like Singapore Idol Sezairi Sezali.

Despite that, she isn't resting on her laurels, and has spent the recent years making bold moves to grow her business.

She worked with SME Centre at Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SME Centre@SMCCI) for guidance on entering new markets.

She shares three tips on what worked for her business.

3 tips from Fatimah on growing your business

CHALLENGE #1

Grow locally



Her Tip: Be open to guidance and get the right connections. I visited SME Centre@SMCCI for advice on expanding The Wedding Gallery's customer base beyond the Malay-Muslim community.

Business advisors worked with me to identify new areas of growth and expand my network to access a larger local market. They connected me with the People's Association, which helped bring my make-up workshops to community centres across the island.

CHALLENGE #2

Expand overseas



Her Tip: There are many types of government support for SMEs. The key is identifying the right one to address your current business challenges, so that you have the confidence to take the next leap.

With some help from Dahlia, my business advisor, The Wedding Gallery participated in key overseas trade shows, which helped gain us a global following. Enterprise Singapore's Market Readiness Assistance programme came in handy to defray part of these expenses.

CHALLENGE #3

Go digital



Her Tip: SMEs understand the benefits of digital solutions but find them costly and are unsure how to get started.

SME Centre@SMCCI involved us in its group-based upgrading project, which gathers likeminded companies to pool resources. Together, we developed digital solutions to common problems. These solutions allowed us to digitalise our inventory and reduce our paperwork.

Now, we have more time for our customers.

THE WEDDING GALLERY'S JOURNEY

2008

MILESTONE #1

- **The Wedding Gallery was founded in 2008.**

2016

MILESTONE #2

- **Going International**
The Wedding Gallery participated in international trade fairs in Australia, Malaysia, Japan, the UK and others.

2017

MILESTONE #3

- **Upgrading Skills**
With the SkillsFuture Fellowship Award, Fatimah further developed her beauty and make-up skills, enabling her to enhance her popular workshops in Singapore.

2018

MILESTONE #4

- **Tapping Digital Solutions**
The company began using digital solutions to improve its efficiency. One of them is an integrated point-of-sales system that allowed for real-time stock and sales tracking.

- **Aiming High**
In 2018, The Wedding Gallery became Singapore's first fashion label to participate in the prestigious London Modest Fashion Week.

Looking ahead, Fatimah plans to expand further into Australia and the UK.

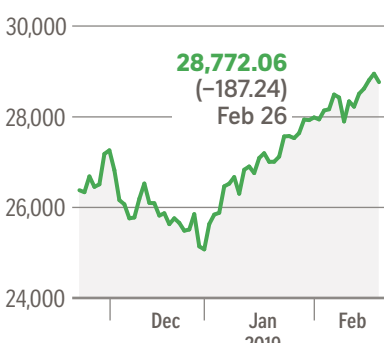


To find out more about how you can **#GrowYourBusiness**, visit

www.enterprisesg.gov.sg/SME-support

**Enterprise
Singapore**

Hang Seng



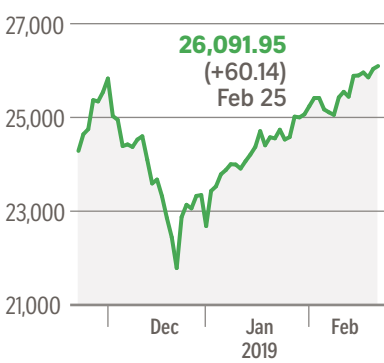
Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

STI slides as optimism over trade deal fades

Weak factory output data also hurts mood; industrial stocks and banks among losers

Lynette Tan

Local shares followed their regional counterparts lower yesterday as investors became a bit less enthusiastic over seeming progress on United States-China trade talks.

The Straits Times Index dipped 10.69 points, or 0.33 per cent, to 3,261.66 with losers outnumbering gainers 215 to 185 on trade of 1.33 billion shares worth \$1.09 billion.

US President Donald Trump initially raised hopes of signing a new trade deal with China, but said a deal "might not happen at all".

The local bourse also had salt rubbed into its wounds with data showing last month's industrial output falling to its lowest in 2½ years, hit by declines in electronics and precision engineering.

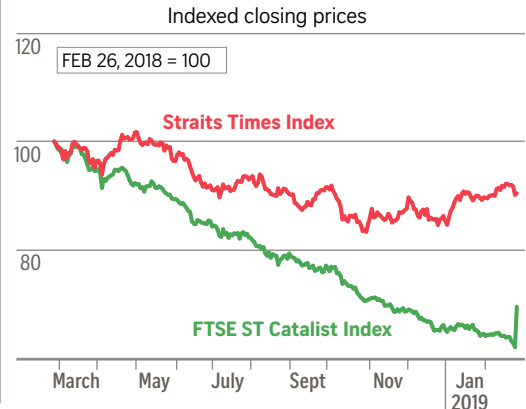
Industrial stocks were among the top losers, with ST Engineering dropping 1.05 per cent to \$3.75 while Sembcorp Industries lost 0.38 per cent to \$2.64.

Financials also saw losses: OCBC led the way, down 1.15 per cent to \$11.20 with United Overseas Bank off 0.35 per cent to \$25.30 and DBS dipping 0.04 per cent to \$25.17.

RHB Research Institute analyst Leng Seng Choon remains overweight on the banking sector as he expects room for net interest margin expansion this year.

Straits Times Index

Feb 26, 2019
3,261.66 ↓
-10.69 (-0.33%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
3,273.82
Day low
3,252.58
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)

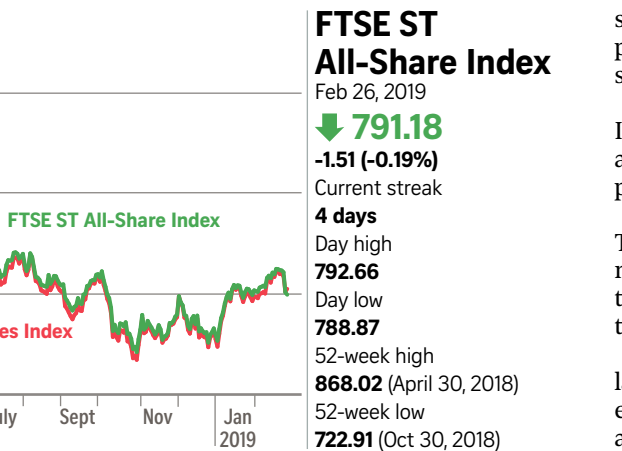


FTSE ST Catalyst Index

Feb 26, 2019
294.09 ↓
-1.97 (-0.67%)
Current streak
3 days
Day high
297.08
Day low
293.63
52-week high
466.75 (Feb 26, 2018)
52-week low
294.09 (Feb 26, 2019)

FTSE ST All-Share Index

Feb 26, 2019
791.18 ↓
-1.51 (-0.19%)
Current streak
4 days
Day high
792.66
Day low
788.87
52-week high
868.02 (April 30, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)



He said: "Over the longer term, we expect more cost efficiencies from digitisation. Dividend yields are also attractive. We have 'buy' recommendations on UOB and DBS."

Tech-linked shares were among the most heavily traded by volume.

AEM Holdings added 4.76 per cent to \$1.10 on trade of 32.73 million, Procurri gained 4.92 per cent to 32 cents, and Creative Technology ended at \$4.89, up 1.88 per cent.

But Hi-P International was the standout, jumping 8.07 per cent to

finish at \$1.34 with 25.74 million shares traded, following brokers' reports signalling confidence in the stock amid the US-China trade war.

Maybank Kim Eng upgraded Hi-P International from "sell" to "hold", after it posted stronger-than-expected fourth-quarter results.

But PhillipCapital trader Marcus Toh thought the overall rise in technology stocks was also a result of traders chasing profits, led by Venture Corp's gains the day before.

Venture posted full-year results last week that were in line with lowered expectations. The street had also cheered Venture's margin expansion and higher dividends.

DBS analyst Carmen Tay wrote: "Net margin is a critical factor driving share price, which is currently well supported by changing business mix. According to our analysis, Venture's net margins have a direct correlation with its share price."

tanlyn@sph.com.sg

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
282	245	Ascendas Reit	281	-1	6468	5.7	1.4
195	161	CapitaCom Trust	192	-2	14394	4.5	1
380	298	Capitaland	350	-3	6619	3.4	0.8
246	198	CapitaMall Trust	246	+1	4130	4.7	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	926 cd	+1	1326	2.2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	243 cd	-2	5478	4.3	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2517 cd	-1	3196	4.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US895	-5	101	2.3	-
133	85.5	Genting Sing	104	-2	36989	3.4	1.6
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	28	unch	17297	2.9	0.7
7205	1099	HPH Trust USD	US23.5	unch	3893	11.2	0.4
4078	3155	HongkongLand USD	US279	unch	1011	2.7	0.3
3819	2766	Jardine C&C	3642	-26	131	3.2	1.8
835	567	JSH USD	US3968	+52	396	0.8	0.5
1404	1036	Keppel Corp	627 cd	-5	2263	4.8	1
564	455	OCBC Bank	1120 cd	-13	7035	3.8	1.2
790	672	SATS	515	+1	1095	3.5	3.6
1184	914	SGX	782	-8	1961	3.8	0.8
292	231	SIA	1010	-9	877	4	1
379	321	SPH	251	unch	2904	5.2	1.1
328	243	ST Engineering	375 cd	-4	4503	4	5.2
358	283	Sembcorp Ind	264 cd	-1	3553	1.5	0.7
88	57.5	Singtel	309	+1	21677	6.6	1.7
3037	2380	ThaiBev	81	-0.5	28626	0.8	4
898	591	UOB	2530 cd	-9	2119	4.7	1.2
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1809 cd	-1	2196	3.9	2.2
340	297	Wilmar Intl	335 cd	-2	6839	3.1	1
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	146	+1	10693	3.1	1.1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
282	245	Ascendas Reit	281	-1	6468	5.7	1.4
120	105	Ascott Reit	114	unch	2300	6.3	1
74.5	59	Bumitama Agri	67.5	+0.5	75	1.1	15
178	143	CDL HTrust	161	+2	1117	-	1.1
195	161	CapitaCom Trust	192	-2	14394	4.5	1
380	298	Capitaland	350	-3	6619	3.4	0.8
246	198	CapitaMall Trust	246	+1	4130	4.7	1.2
164	133	CapitaStar China Tr	144	unch	1363	7.1	0.9
1359	780	CityDev	926 cd	+1	1326	2.2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	243 cd	-2	5478	4.3	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2517 cd	-1	3196	4.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US895	-5	101	2.3	-
72.5	59	Far East HTrust	65	+1	1299	-	0.7
183	150	First Resources	170	+1	1610	4	2.2
232	212	Fraser's Cpt Tr	231	unch	500	5.2	11.1
114	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	111	+2	3767	6.2	1.2
133	85.5	Genting Sing	104	-2	36989	3.4	1.6
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	28	unch	17297	2.9	0.7
7205	1099	HPH Trust USD	US23.5	unch	3893	11.2	0.4
4078	3155	HongkongLand USD	US279	unch	1011	2.7	0.3
3819	2766	Jardine C&C	3642	-26	131	3.2	1.8
835	567	JSH USD	US3968	+52	396	0.8	0.5
1404	1036	Keppel Corp	627 cd	-5	2263	4.8	1
58	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	51	+1	13254	7.3	1.9
125	108	Keppel Reit	123	unch	6253	4.5	0.9
273	170	Nam Oriental USD	US206	+3	99	1.5	1.5
186	152	Mapletree Com Tr	173	+3	7736	5.1	1.2
206	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	200	+1	4242	5.9	1.4
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	139	unch	6903	5.5	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	126	unch	4826	5.9	1
82.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr	80	+0.5	5967	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1120 cd	-13	7035	3.8	1.2
195	161	OUE HTrust	158	unch	86	1.9	0.4
87	64.5	OUE HT Trust	72	+0.5	1261	-	1
250	157	Olam Intl	198	-4	1060	3.8	1
59	28	Oxley	33.5	unch	817	4.5	1
288	256	ParkwayLife Reit	283	-2	312	4.5	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	111	-1	1528	2.3	2.5
564	455	SATS	515	+1	1095	3.5	3.6
790	672	SGX	782	-8	1961	3.8	0.8
1184	914	SIA	1010	-9	877	4	1
335	220	SIA Engineering	240	+4	564	5.4	1.8
292	231	SPH	251	unch	2904	5.2	1.1
103	98	SPHREIT	102	unch	379	5.4	1.1
379	321	ST Engineering	375 cd	-4	4503	4	5.2
328	243	Sembcorp Ind	264 cd	-1	3553	1.5	0.7
235	149	Sembcorp Marine	171	-1	6220	-	1
57	39	Silverlake Axis	55	+2	7141	5.5	8
141	88.5	SingPost	101	unch	1663	3.5	1.3
358	283	Singtel	309	+1	21677	6.6	1.7
253	157	StarHub	160	+1	5728	10	5
73.5	63.5	Starhill Gbl Reit	70	+0.5	935	6.5	0.8
199	163	Suntec Reit	192	-2	5055	5.2	0.9
88	57.5	ThaiBev	81	-0.5	28626	0.8	4
102	37	Thomson Medical	7.9	unch	15896	-	2.9
3037	2380	UOB	2530 cd	-9	2119	4.7	1.2
898	591	UOL	677	-2	614	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1809 cd	-1	2196	3.9	2.2
340	297	Wilmar Intl	335 cd	-2	6839	3.1	1
224	183	Wing Tai	204	unch	173	3.9	0.5
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	146	+1	10693	3.1	1.1
182	116	Yanlord Land	147	+3	1973	4.6	0.6

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	139	+1	305	7.4	1
68.5	48	Accordia Golf Tr	62	-0.5	550	6.2	0.7
86.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	85.5	+1	536	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	115	unch	498	5.3	1.3
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.1cd	unch	2777	39.5	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	59	-0.5	208	1.7	0.8
333	115	Best World	253	+32	22848	1.6	9.1
85.5	76	Boustead	80.5	-0.5	57	3.7	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	87.5 cd	+0.5	89	1.7	3
632	521	Bukit Sembawang	565	-3	49	3.2	1.1
84.5	65.5	Cache Log Trust	72	+1	2635	8.2	1.1
52	39.5	Centurion	40.5	-0.5	128	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	133	-2	791	3.4	1.1
46	29.5	China Everbright	35	unch	1253	2.8	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	133	unch	1351	2.3	1.5
103	64	Chip Eng Seng	75 cd	+1	4252	5.3	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	36.5	-0.5	3604	-	1.6
700	302	Delong	568	-1	8	-	0.6
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	19.6	unch	116	9.4	1.2
77.5	67.5	EC World Reit	77 cd	+0.5	688	8	0.9
58.5	47	ESR-REIT	54	unch	2716	7.1	1.2
140	92	First Reit	106	unch	1066	8.1	1
152	135	Fraser's Com Tr	149	unch	1121	6.4	1
79.5	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	72.5	unch	584	-	1
25.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	18.7	+0.1	336	5.3	1.1
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	79	-1	475	3.5	2.4
67.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	55	+0.5	267	0.6	5.3
279	73	Hi-P Intl	134	+10	25744	3.7	1.9
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	273	-1	44	4.8	0.7
80.5	71	IREIT Global	76.5 cd	unch	232	7.3	1
36.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	21.5	-1	1342	-	0.3
84	43	Japfa	77.5	-4	6247	0.6	1.5
7	49	KSH	52	+0.5	67	4.2	0.9
85	53	Keppel-KBS Reit USD	66.5	unch	130	9.4	0.6
147	+1	Keppel DC Reit	147	+1	2520	5	1.4
188	unch	Keppel T&T	188	unch	473	-	1.2
81	unch	KrisEnergy	81	unch	4516	-	1
50	unch	Lian Beng	50	unch	202	4.5	0.4
20.5 cd	unch	Lippo Malls Tr	20.5 cd	unch	2925	10	0.7
28.5	+1.5	MM2 Asia	28.5	+1.5	1061	-	1.6
84	+0.5	ManulifeReit USD	84	+0.5	854	6.6	0.7
100	unch	Metro	100	unch	75	5	0.6
19	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
63.4	45	OUE Com Reit	50.5	unch	938	6.9	0.7
65	54	PEC	56.5	+1	135	3.5	0.6
39	17	POSH	18	-0.3	90	-	0.7
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	47.5	-0.5	143	3.4	3.4
108	55.5	QAF Ltd	70	+1	104	7.1	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	110	-1	1171	2.1	3.5
54.5	22	SIIC Environment	36.5	-0.5	138	5.5	0.6
45	38.5	Sabana Reit	42.5	+0.5	97	7.5	0.7
119	92.5	Sheng Siong	109 cd	+1	2988	3.1	5.6
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	6.9	+0.6	20868	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	60	unch	368	8.8	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	95	+2	1110	-	0.8
46	32.5	Tuan Sing	38.5 cd	-0.5	1228	2.3	0.4
136	54	UMS	73 cd	+2	11134	5.5	1.7
112	58.5	Valuetronics	72.5	+1	4973	6.3	1.6
15	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.4	-0.1	3456	-	0.3
48.5	24	Yoma Strategic	33.5	-0.5	1240	0.7	0.9
33	16.1	Yongnam	17.3	-0.1	891	-	0.3

OBITUARIES

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The Family of the Late



Maria Mun Swee Heong

~ Returned to the Lord on 18th February 2019 ~

express their gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to friends, relatives, priests, religious nuns, the Damien Society and Church of St Teresa and its prayer group and choir who attended the wake, memorial service and cremation of our beloved matriarch, and for their tributes, flowers, donations and support.

We wish to acknowledge the doctors and nurses of National University Hospital and caregivers for their compassionate service.

We especially thank Dr Chong Yeh Woei for his dedicated care over the years.

Special thanks for concelebrating the memorial service to:-
Rev Fr Romeo Yu Chang CICM, Rev Fr Colin Tan SJ,
Rev Fr Simon Tan CSsR, Rev Fr Adrian Anthony,
Rev Fr Cary Chan and Rev Fr Timothy Yeo.

ATHMA SHANTI POOJA



Narayani Rajagopal Naidu

Departed on 19 February 2019

We, the family of late Narayani Ramadas, wish to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all relatives and friends for their kind assistance, attendance, condolences, donations and wreaths during our recent bereavement.

Karumathi prayers will be held on Thursday night 28 February 2019 at Block 215 Tampines Street 23 #02-57, Singapore 520215 followed by **Athma Shanti Pooja** on Friday 1 March 2019 at 7.00pm at Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple, 397 Serangoon Road, Singapore 218123. Please treat this as a personal invitation. Tel: 6785 2930

"Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate." Proverbs 31:31



Suzie Su Poh Choo

Age: 88

Was called home to be with the Lord on 26 February 2019. Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Tan Peng Koon Billy (deceased)

Daughters: Corrine Tan Choon Gan

Cynthia Tan Choon Leng

Caroline Tan Choon Eng

Grandsons: Christopher Kam

Joshua Kam

Son-in-law: Jim Kam Min Yee

Granddaughter-in-law: Melissa Kam

And all relatives and friends.

Through everything Mom went through, she managed to keep her priorities straight.

Loving Jesus & loving the family.

Mom kept her faith through all of her trials.

We are so thankful to God for her.

Wake is held at Church of St Stephen, Prayer Room 1, 30 Sallim Road, Singapore 387639 from Wednesday 27 February 2019, 6.00pm onwards.

Nightly services will be held at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Friday 1 March 2019 at 1.45pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 2.45pm.

No wreaths please.

All donations will go to St. Joseph's Home.

JOHN 14:6

Jesus said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

In Loving Memory of



Zhou Yingnan @ Tjioe Ji Nan

*

departed on 27 February 2014

Remembering and honouring him for how he lived.
A man who taught not by words, but by his actions.
An optimist who faced adversity with resolute.
A literati, a writer, a man of respectable demeanour.
He truly loved life and embraced it with deep purpose and determination.

Deeply missed by

Wife: Ho Njoek Foeng

Son: Andrew

Daughters:

Jia Ping, Jocelyn, Synthia, Ka In

and All Family Members



Vasantharani

Age: 70

Passed away peacefully on 26 February 2019, dearly missed and remembered by loved ones.

Sisters:

Mrs Thangarathnam Gengadaram

Brother:

Mangaran N. V. Brothers-in-law:

Late Gengadaram

Somasundaram Pooranapavan

Nephews: Ravindran G.

Surendran G and Seaverl P.

Nieces: Latha Ravindran,

Shamila Surendran and Vinashini P.

All relatives and friends.

Vasantharani is resting at

Block 888A Tampines Street 81

#03-1080, Singapore 521888.

Cortege leaves on Wednesday

27 February 2019 at 3.00pm

for Mandai Crematorium

for cremation.

Contact: Pavan

6785 1014 / 96970738

4th Anniversary
In Loving Memory Of



ARRIOLA MERCEDES EUGENIE

Departed on

27 February 2015

Gone from our lives so dear,

But in our hearts forever near,

Deeply missed & always

remembered by

Siblings, Nephews, Nieces,

Relatives & "Friends".



G. Gnaneswaran

Age: 76

Passed away peacefully on 26 February 2019. Dearly missed and cherished by loved ones.

Wife: Mahalakshmi

Daughters:

Indra

Komi

Grandchildren:

Arvin, Vickram, Shivaani

Brothers:

Siva (deceased)

Mages (deceased)

Karu

Ravi

Sons-in-law:

Elangovan

Rajdev

Sisters:

Kannagy

Baby

Helper:

Rathi

Nephews, nieces, all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at 3 Lorong Kemangan, Singapore 417321.

Cortege leaves on Wednesday 27 February 2019 at 4.00pm

for cremation at Mandai Crematorium.



Gurunathan Kumar

Age: 69

Passed away peacefully on 26 February 2019, dearly missed and remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Rani

Children & Spouses:

Srinathan & Malini

Srivithya & Haridas

Grandchildren:

Rakesh, Ranesh, Raavin

and Sharvin

And all relatives and friends.

Dad is resting at Block 548

Bedok North Avenue 1 802-412,

Singapore 460548. Tel: 9337 7134

Cortege leaves on Wednesday

27 February 2019 at 4.30pm for

Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for

cremation at 6.45pm.

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- Original Death Certificate
- Identity Card of person placing the announcement
- Details to be included in the announcement, e.g. list of family names, information on wake and funeral

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on weekdays after 5.30pm and on weekends.

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remember...



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SPORT

WAV

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HSBC Women's World Championship 2019



From far left: Georgia Hall, Lexi Thompson, defending champion Michelle Wie, Ryu So-yeon and world No. 1 Ariya Jutanugarn at Singapore's latest attraction – Jewel Changi Airport – before they get down to business at the HSBC Women's World Championship. PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES, GAVIN FOO

THE PEOPLE'S CHAMPION

Ariya opens her heart to the media and shows that she is as down to earth as she is talented

David Lee

When she was not snacking on crispy fish skin in between interviews, Ariya Jutanugarn was laughingly dishing out sister feud snippets, openly baring her weaknesses and insecurities, and having the media eat out of her hand.

When the HSBC Women's World Championship commences tomorrow, the charming Thai will again be the golfer to watch.

She is honest, hilarious and also wonderfully talented.

Last year, she swept most of the season's major honours – the Annika Major Award for the best record in all five Major championships, the Player of the Year award, the Vare Trophy with a scor-

ing average of 69.415, and topping the money list with US\$2,743,949 (S\$3.7 million).

She is clearly an extraordinary athlete, but also a refreshingly normal person.

"I just want to be myself, have fun, and improve every day," said the 23-year-old, who picked up golf from a young age as her parents also played the sport and owned a golf shop.

"I never want to be like others. I love myself so much. I want to be honest to myself, I'm not going to do things I don't like to do."

Ariya reckoned this mindset is crucial for her to regain the fearless form she had in her breakthrough season in 2016 when she won her first Major (the Women's British Open) and four other events.

She knows her world No. 1 status will not last forever, but the joy of playing the sport she loves could.

"Becoming No. 1 for the first time (in 2017) was so tough for me because I felt lots of pressure," said Ariya, who launched a foundation with older sister Moriya, 24, in 2017 to help needy children and families in Thailand.

"Everyone was expecting me to play well all the time, but that's not true. I just needed to be myself and have fun and understand that we are human and we make mistakes."

"I don't feel the burden of being No. 1 any more because I know what I'm doing. I'm talking to you as world No. 1 now but, next Monday, I may not be, so I don't pay attention to the rankings."

"The outcome might not be that good as last year, but I'm not worried about the outcome and I'm not scared of anything."

"I used to have so much fun and I was so happy to be on the golf



JUST BEING ME

I never want to be like others. I love myself so much. I want to be honest to myself, I'm not going to do things I don't like to do.



ARIYA JUTANUGARN (above), Thai world No. 1, who wants to regain the fun feeling on the golf course.

course. But I don't have that feeling for two years already, so now I just want to have that feeling again."

She may seem relaxed now, but it's been a learning process. As she admitted, again with a hearty laugh, there was a time she would smash and break clubs in half after a bad shot, a habit she has since kicked.

When she was not talking candidly about her game, the easy-going golfer was telling fun stories about herself and Moriya. They will share a room again this week and, while Ariya has a tidy game, she cannot keep a clean room.

Sheepishly, she admitted: "My mum is coming on Friday and she will clean up for me."

Living with her sister on tour can be a constant adventure which natu-

rally involves the occasional quarrel. As she said: "Last week, we roomed together and fought so bad before the tournament... I thought we won't talk to each other again. But, on the first tee, she talked to me, so I talked to her."

Family comes first and the only things she splurged on from her \$3.7 million earnings last year were a bag and diamond earrings for her mother. But nothing for herself.

LPGA commissioner Michael Whan hailed the Jutanugarns' authenticity, and is proud to have the bright and bubbly personalities as ambassadors of the tour.

He said: "Ariya is impressive and a little bit intimidating. She does it in an incredibly friendly way, clapping for you and high-fiving you but, at the end of the day, she is scarily good."

"Suzanne Pettersen talked about looking up at the leaderboard to see where she was and where Annika Sorenstam was. She said, for her, that person became Lorena Ochoa and I think Ariya is that person today. Everybody wants to know where she is on the leaderboard because she is that good."

"They hated that Lorena beat them, but they loved her as a person. I think Ariya has got a lot of the same kind of qualities. They totally respect her as a competitor, she is a little bit intimidating, but she is hard not to like because she is just so likeable, like her sister."

"You find yourself rooting for people like that because they are good people inside out."

davidlee@sph.com.sg

Superstitious Hall banks on consistency in Singapore

Laura Chia

When golfer Georgia Hall won the Women's British Open last year, her father Wayne wore the same socks for four consecutive days.

It turned out to be a lucky charm as she won her maiden Major by two strokes (17-under 271).

For the HSBC Women's World Championship starting tomorrow at the Sentosa Golf Club, Hall's boyfriend and caddie Harry Tyrrell may have to do the same.

"If I do good in the first round, I

might tell him to keep the same ones on. But definitely throw them away at the end of the week," Hall, who has many superstitious routines, said at a press conference yesterday.

"Before I tee off, and this is quite weird, I have to count my golf clubs to make sure it's 14, but I have to touch every one, twice."

The 22-year-old will also wear the same pair of shoes for the whole tournament.

"It's got to be the same ones because I feel that (any other pair, even if it's the same model) might be different," Hall said.

The Englishwoman was not finished with listing her superstitions.

"I've marked the ball the same way ever since I can remember, which is three dots beside Titleist and my initials in the middle. Every one's got to be the same colour – red," she added.

Hall turned professional in 2014 after winning the British Ladies Amateur Golf Championship the previous year.

While she became the first Briton since 2004 to win last August's British Open, she is still coming to grips with the victory.

"To be honest, me winning still hasn't sunk in at all. Even though I know I have, I still don't believe it because... it's my only dream growing up, so it's still strange," she added.

"Because of that, I think I'm still slightly the same person. But, if I am playing bad on a hole or I'm struggling, I do say to myself, 'Georgia, you won the British Open.'"

The world No. 10 will have to channel that confidence to the New Tanjong Course as she battles the world's top golfers including defending champion Michelle Wie

and top-ranked Ariya Jutanugarn for the title.

"Obviously, I'd love to win it, but (at last year's tournament, where she finished joint-48th with an even-par 288 total), I had some really good rounds and then I had some poor rounds that kind of got me out of the tournament."

"So I think my main thing is just consistency with four rounds."

Hall also revealed her dislike for social media, saying that if she were not a professional golfer, she would not have any social media accounts. She currently has accounts on

Twitter and Instagram where her posts are mainly about golf.

"It's great for people to know what I'm doing and, if I play this week and how I finish in a tournament, I think it's good for people who want to follow me," she said.

"But I think a lot of social media sometimes does more harm than good to people, and it makes, especially women, think that they are not good enough."

"I don't think it's good but for golf, I think it's good."

claura@sph.com.sg

CITY MUST 'FIGHT TILL THE END' FOR TITLE

Despite growing injury list, Pep tells players to keep pressure on Liverpool in EPL race

LONDON • Manchester City have just won the League Cup last Sunday, but manager Pep Guardiola believes there is no time to rest as he urged his team to carry on the momentum in their bid to retain their Premier League title this season.

City will host West Ham in the league today and, when asked yesterday if his players were fatigued following the penalty shoot-out win over Chelsea, the Spaniard said: "It helps. The guys train good when you win the second title of the season (after their Community Shield win).

"The last few days, the conditions have improved, but the reality is we don't have much time to think about what has happened.

"After the West Ham game, we have three days and then Bournemouth, but we are going to pick a strong side in order to try and win the game."

While it is Guardiola's ambition to win every competition his team are contesting, he will likely be cautious when former City boss Manuel Pellegrini's Hammers visit the Etihad.

Midfielder Fernandinho (groin)

and central defender Aymeric Laporte (hamstring) picked up injuries at Wembley that would sideline them for several weeks.

Fernandinho, in particular, has become one of Guardiola's most dependable lieutenants.

Since his arrival in 2013, City have won more than 70 per cent of the games in which he has played, a percentage that drops below 60 in his absence.

Most recently, when City suffered shock consecutive defeats by Crystal Palace and Leicester, the 33-year-old was absent.

Ilkay Gundogan and Fabian Delph are logical replacements in the defensive midfield role, but they cannot match Fernandinho's poise and tackling ability.

The Brazilian's all-round excellence even saw him selected at centre-half for the recent home win over Arsenal, and the loss of Laporte adds to the manager's concerns in that department.

Veteran Vincent Kompany has struggled for fitness and form for much of the season although John Stones is close to returning from his injury layoff.

Guardiola knows that if City are to win the Premier League again this term, and also the FA Cup and the Champions League, Fernandinho will be a crucial factor.

City, on 65 points, go into today's match a point behind leaders Liverpool, who have drawn three of their last four league matches.

"Still, they are leading," Guardiola said, shrugging off suggestions that Jurgen Klopp's men are struggling.

"There are still a lot of games to play and they are leading by one point. The lead is shorter than I expected a few weeks ago, but they are still leading.

"I didn't watch the Liverpool game against Manchester United (0-0 draw) so I cannot give you an opinion.

"The difference is one point with 33 points to play. It's in Liverpool's hands, but it's in ours too, we have to put on pressure. We fight until the end for the title."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MAN CITY V WEST HAM

Singtel TV Ch105 & StarHub Ch230, tomorrow, 3.50am



Manchester City players like captain Vincent Kompany and striker Sergio Aguero have little time to celebrate last Sunday's League Cup triumph. They return to Premier League action today against former City manager Manuel Pellegrini's West Ham before the visit to Bournemouth on Saturday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Commentary

Tentativeness creeping into Reds' misfiring attack

Jonathan Wilson

There was a moment with just over an hour played when Jordan Henderson picked up possession in the centre circle. He looked up, waited, looked up some more and eventually, having no other option, floated a long ball forward.

Chris Smalling won the header against Sadio Mane and another Liverpool attack withered into nothingness. The impetus of November and December has ebbed away and, although the Reds still have the tide race in their own hands, there is a distinct sense that the momentum is now with Manchester City.

There were specific frustrations on Sunday, given how United spent the entire first half in a blur of reorganisation, their technical area transformed into a triage station.

But, the truth is that since the 5-1 win over Arsenal at the end of

December, Liverpool have not played with the sort of attacking verve for which they have become renowned under Jurgen Klopp.

There's a tendency to always want what you do not have, to believe that the blanket is always slightly too small, but there have been times this season when Liverpool's midfield has seemed distinctly functional.

Nobody can realistically doubt that Liverpool did well from the sale of Philippe Coutinho, who wanted to go anyway, and whose fee helped pay for Virgil van Dijk, but equally there have been times this season when they have lacked a little of the invention he might have brought.

Perhaps if Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain had not been ruled out with a cruciate injury, he could have provided a little thrust. But the fact is that a team that set up with Henderson, Fabinho and Georginio Wijnaldum as their midfield three will always risk

being a little lacking in guile.

Which raises the question of how Liverpool last season, even after Oxlade-Chamberlain had suffered his knee injury, never seemed so flat as this. The answer perhaps lies in pressing – play high up the pitch, keep the opponents under constant pressure and mistakes will be made and chances will come.

It was a theory that had worked for Klopp at Mainz and at Borussia Dortmund and was doing so at Liverpool as well.

The problem was that it came at a cost. Liverpool finished last season in a state of exhaustion, their squad stretched to the absolute maximum. So Klopp took the logical step of easing back. The team have, by and large, not pressed with anything like the same intensity this season.

The result has been fewer injuries and an improved defence, but the change of approach has also highlighted the lack of midfield flair since the departure of Coutinho.

The impetus of November and December has ebbed away and, although Liverpool still have the title race in their own hands, there is a distinct sense that the momentum is now with Manchester City.

None of which would necessarily matter were the front three firing as they did in those final months of last season. But they are not. Roberto Firmino has been struggling with a virus recently and left Old Trafford on crutches after suffering an ankle injury. Mohamed Salah has seemed oddly out of sorts in recent weeks, at times bafflingly so. Mane, with four

goals in successive games before the draw against Bayern, has been left to carry the burden.

But to speak of individuals, perhaps, is to miss the point.

The interaction between the front three is not what it was. There is not the same sense of a telepathic understanding. In part, that's to do with opponents sitting deep so the opportunities for those thrilling sweeping counters are diminished, but only in part.

A tentativeness has crept into Liverpool's attacking play that has ramifications across the pitch.

If the movement is not so slick as it should be, there are fewer targets for Henderson to hit, which perhaps explains why so often he resorted to hitting it long.

A draw at Old Trafford can never be a poor result and, if City lose there on April 25, it will look a very good one. But the bigger issue for Liverpool is perhaps more the performance and the general lack of penetration. THE GUARDIAN

Milner wants team to deliver better final ball

LONDON • Following two goal-less draws, Liverpool vice-captain James Milner has urged his team to improve on their finishing by adapting better to the task of breaking down stubborn opponents.

The Reds experienced a frustrating 0-0 draw with Manchester United at Old Trafford on Sunday, when they could not translate their 65 per cent possession into decent

scoring opportunities.

Earlier last week, Jurgen Klopp's men also drew 0-0 at Anfield against German Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich in the first leg of the Champions League last-16 tie.

"When you play for a team like Liverpool and, with the players we've got, you want to win every game no matter who it's against –

and we know we can," Milner told Sky Sports ahead of today's Premier League home match against Watford.

"I just don't think we were good enough with our movements, and the final ball at times.

"Around the box, we didn't manage to open them up as much as we would have liked."

Leaders Liverpool are just a point ahead of champions Manchester City (65 points) in the Premier League table before today's round of fixtures, which will see Pep Guardiola's men take on West Ham at the Etihad Stadium.

Reds defender Andy Robertson knows how slim the margins are

and has also called on his teammates to start "respecting ourselves" because Liverpool are more than capable of just one win and four draws in their last five matches in all competitions.

"Big teams like Bayern and Manchester United are full of world-class stars and they changed their way of playing to try to stop us," the left-back told the club's website.

"We need to take that as a mark of respect and not shy away from it, stand up to that and show them why there is respect." THE GUARDIAN

LIVERPOOL V WATFORD

Singtel TV Ch104 & StarHub Ch229, tomorrow, 3.50am

SportsWorld

S'pore shooters off target in World Cup

None of the four Singapore women shooters made the finals at the New Delhi World Cup leg yesterday.

Martina Veloso and Jasmine Ser were 23rd (1,167 points) and 42nd (1,161) respectively in the 50m rifle three-positions, with the former missing out on the final eight by four points.

In the 10m air pistol, Teo Shun Xie (570), in 27th place, was also four points behind the last qualifier, while Teh Xiu Hong shot 569 for 30th spot. Ho Xiu Yi had finished sixth in last Saturday's opening event – the women's 10m air rifle.

Tampines down Yangan in AFC Cup

Three goals in 13 second-half minutes helped Tampines Rovers get their AFC Cup campaign off to a winning start yesterday.

The Stags beat Yangan United 3-1 in their Group F clash in Myanmar thanks to goals from Khairul Amri, Zehrudin Mehmedovic and Ryutaro Megumi.

Tampines' next match is against Hanoi FC on March 12 at the Jalan Besar Stadium. The Vietnamese team thrashed Cambodia's Nagaworld FC 10-0 yesterday to top Group F on goal difference.

Qatar may share an expanded World Cup

ABU DHABI • The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Oman could stage some 2022 World Cup matches in order to hold an expanded event, if the countries have resolved their diplomatic dispute with tournament host Qatar, the UAE's sports chief Mohammed Khalfan al-Romaithi said yesterday.

World governing body Fifa is expected to decide next month whether it will expand the Finals from 32 to 48 teams. REUTERS

Simeone faces Uefa probe for lewd action

PARIS • European football's governing body Uefa announced on Monday it has started disciplinary proceedings into improper conduct by Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone.

The Argentinian celebrated his side's first goal in their 2-0 Champions League last-16, first-leg win over Juventus on Feb 20 by grasping his genitals and thrusting out his groin.

Simeone apologised and said it was to recognise his team's courage. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Federer off to winning start in 100th-title bid

DUBAI • Roger Federer began his latest quest for a 100th ATP title with a battling 6-4, 3-6, 6-1 win over Philipp Kohlschreiber in the first round of the Dubai Tennis Championships on Monday.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion, who has been stuck on 99 titles since triumphing at his hometown Basel tournament last October, next faces Fernando Verdasco after the world No. 32 got past Italian qualifier Thomas Fabbiano 3-6, 6-3, 6-2. REUTERS

A Game of Two Halves

ST correspondents Sazali Abdul Aziz and Wang Meng Meng discuss football, basketball, the triathlon, athletics and mixed martial arts action in Singapore over the weekend: <http://str.sg/oaMX>



WE DON'T WANT TO KILL SORRY KEPA: SARRI

Chelsea boss keen to move on from spat but undecided if keeper will start against Spurs

LONDON • Maurizio Sarri has yet to decide if Kepa Arrizabalaga will start today's Premier League game against Tottenham Hotspur, with the beleaguered Chelsea head coach to make his decision for the collective good of his group.

Arrizabalaga apologised to Sarri, the technical staff, teammates and supporters on Monday for refusing to be substituted in the final minute of extra time in the League Cup final defeat by Manchester City on Sunday.

The 24-year-old Spaniard, who saved one penalty and might have denied Sergio Aguero in the shoot-out, was fined a week's wages around £190,000 (\$\$337,700) for an act of petulance which had very

publicly undermined Sarri's authority.

Chelsea had been keen to draw a line under the incident, issuing statements on Monday from the head coach and player while confirming the sanction.

Yet Sarri, who goes into the Spurs fixture fighting to retain his position after recent damaging results, offered the world's most expensive goalkeeper no guarantees that he would retain his place.

Asked whether Arrizabalaga would start, the Italian said: "I don't know. I have to decide. Maybe yes. Maybe no. I think he is fit. I have to decide what is better for my group."

"He made a mistake. A big mistake. There are some conse-

PRICE TO PAY

He made a mistake. A big mistake. There are some consequences. If the consequence is to play, he has to be ready to play. If the consequence is the bench, he has to be ready to go to the bench.



MAURIZIO SARRI, Chelsea manager, on Kepa disobeying a substitution order during the League Cup final defeat.

quences. If the consequence is to play, he has to be ready to play. If the consequence is the bench, he has to be ready to go to the bench."

Sarri, who tends to reveal his selections to his team close to kick-off, rejected the notion that Arrizabalaga's dissent had exposed a lack of respect in which the head coach is held by the senior squad, and insisted he remained in control.

"It was a very unusual situation so the players were very shocked. It was impossible to react immediately," said the 60-year-old.

"I spoke to Kepa, I spoke to everyone. He said sorry to the technical staff, but it wasn't enough."

"He said sorry to the players and the club. We don't want to kill him."

The League Cup final loss to City and Chelsea's poor league form, with three losses in the last four matches, has heaped pressure on Sarri, but the former Napoli boss is

not worried about his future.

"I'm not under pressure, you have to ask the club. I don't know why you ask me. I want to win every match," he said.

Defender David Luiz insisted that the players are still on Sarri's side.

"The coach has the power over the group. He has our respect," the Brazilian said.

"For me, there is not a problem here for that. We all believe in his philosophy, we all believe in the way he wants us to play."

A defeat by Spurs could leave the Blues six points adrift of the top four. They are sixth on 50 points, 10 behind third-placed Tottenham and they trail Arsenal, in fourth, by three.

Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino, meanwhile, has accepted an Football Association (FA) charge of improper conduct for confronting referee Mike Dean after last Saturday's shock 2-1 Premier League defeat, ostensibly over the corner that led to Burnley's opening goal.

The Argentinian was charged over two breaches of the FA's Rule E3, which concerns general behaviour and faces the prospect of a fine or a touchline ban.

He has publicly apologised to Dean. THE GUARDIAN, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

CHelsea v TOTTENHAM
Singtel TV Ch103 & StarHub Ch228, tomorrow, 3.50am

Injuries force Solskjaer to turn to reserves

LONDON • Manchester United could have up to nine injured first-team players when they travel to Crystal Palace in the Premier League today, but Ole Gunnar Solskjaer believes that his Under-23s can step up in their absences.

Antonio Valencia, Matteo Darmian, Phil Jones, Nemanja Matic, Ander Herrera, Juan Mata, Jesse Lingard and Anthony Martial are all on the sidelines, while Marcus Rashford is in doubt after suffering an ankle knock during last Sunday's 0-0 draw with Liverpool.

Speaking at his pre-match conference yesterday, interim manager Solskjaer hinted that Angel Gomes, Tahith Chong and James Garner could play a part today.

"They've been part of our training for a long time now and I'm sure Angel has been successful with England's Under-17s. I'm definitely sure that if he gets a chance, he'll do well," said the Norwegian, who turned 46 yesterday.

"James Garner is a Michael Carrick but 20 years younger, I'm sure he'll do well and Chongy will be taking people on if he comes on."

"They're ready, they're kids. It's hard if you're a defender coming on if you're 16 or 17 but, as an attacker, you go out there and express yourself. They can win you the game, not lose it for you."

United have yet to lose a league game since Solskjaer took over in December.

Palace, meanwhile, are unbeaten in their last six matches in all competitions.

He said: "We have to be good on the ball, break them down, but we know on the counter-attack they've got some pace and counter-attacking threat, so we've got to be at our best."

United go into the match in fifth place on 52 points, one behind fourth-placed Arsenal and two ahead of Chelsea, who have a game in hand.

Former Arsenal midfielder Paul Merson, however, believes that the Gunners are "flat-track bullies" and will not finish fourth with just 11 games left.

He said ahead of their game today: "With Bournemouth's injuries, I can only see an Arsenal win. But they've got a bad result in them. They will be caught up in the end." REUTERS

CRYSTAL PALACE v MAN UNITED
Singtel TV Ch106 & StarHub Ch231, tomorrow, 3.50am



Kepa Arrizabalaga going the wrong way as a penalty from Manchester City's Bernardo Silva goes past him during Chelsea's penalty shoot-out defeat in Sunday's League Cup final. Coach Maurizio Sarri is yet to decide whether the Spaniard will retain his place in Chelsea's goal against Tottenham after the player refused to be substituted in extra time of the final. PHOTO: REUTERS

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Wed, 27 Feb 2019				
Asian FC Cup	Home United	PSM Makassar	7.30pm	LW*
Thu, 28 Feb 2019				
English Premier	Arsenal	Bournemouth	3.45am	LW*
English Premier	Manchester City	West Ham	4.00am	LW*
English Premier	Liverpool	Watford	4.00am	LW*
English Premier	Chelsea	Tottenham	4.00am	LW*
English Premier	Crystal Palace	Manchester Utd	4.00am	LW*
Italian Cup	Fiorentina	Atalanta	4.00am	LW*

LW* - Telecast not available at Livewire(Singapore Pools)
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TOTO	
Mon, 25 Feb 2019 Draw No. 3452/2019	
Group 1 Prize: \$1,167,738	No Winner
Draw No. 3453/2019	Group 1 Prize \$2,400,000 est.
Next Draw Thu, 28 Feb 2019 6.30pm	
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SINGAPORE POOLS

Rodgers closing in on EPL return with Leicester

LONDON • Brendan Rodgers will soon make his return to managing in the Premier League, as Celtic "very reluctantly" granted him permission to talk to Leicester City.

The 46-year-old Northern Irishman, who has not coached a Premier League team since being sacked by Liverpool in October 2015, is in talks about filling the vacancy left by Claude Puel, who was sacked last Sunday.

Rodgers, who came agonisingly close to landing an elusive Premier League title for Liverpool in the 2013-14 season, has rebuilt his reputation in Scotland, guiding Celtic to a historic double treble in two seasons and are on course for a third one this term.

However, not even the lure of that - and getting the better of

Rangers manager Steven Gerrard who played under him at Liverpool - has been enough to deter him from meeting the Leicester hierarchy.

"Celtic Football Club today confirmed that it has been approached by Leicester City to speak to Brendan Rodgers with regard to their current managerial vacancy," read a Celtic statement.

"Brendan has indicated to the club that this is an opportunity he wishes to investigate further and therefore, very reluctantly, the club has granted him permission to speak to Leicester."

Prior to Liverpool, Rodgers was in charge at Swansea, where he introduced a brand of possession-based play inspired by his interest in Spanish football.

Since arriving at Parkhead in 2016, Rodgers has won two league titles, three Scottish League Cups and two Scottish Cups.

Celtic are currently eight points clear of local rivals Rangers in the Scottish Premiership as they chase an eighth consecutive top-division title.

Puel was dismissed after 16 months in charge following Saturday's 4-1 defeat by Crystal Palace.

The 57-year-old Frenchman left the club 12th in the Premier League, having lost five of their past six league games and just eight points above the relegation zone.

First-team coaches Mike Stowell and Adam Sadler were put in temporary charge for their league match at home to Brighton yesterday. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS



2
Scottish Premier League titles
Brendan Rodgers won with Celtic.

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NOTICES

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL
ABL CLS Knights Indonesia v S'pore Slingers (StarHub Ch202, 7pm).

FOOTBALL
AFC Cup Group H: Home v Makassar (Jalan Besar, 7.30pm, Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208), Lao v Kaya (Ch115 & Ch209) - 7.20pm.
English Premier League Chelsea v Tottenham (Ch103 & Ch228),

Liverpool v Watford (Ch104 & Ch229), Man City v West Ham (Ch105 & Ch230), Palace v Man United (Ch106 & Ch231) - tomorrow, 3.50am. Arsenal v Bournemouth (Ch107 & Ch232), Southampton v Fulham (Ch108 & Ch233) - tomorrow, 3.35am.

TENNIS
ATP Dubai Championships Day 3 (StarHub Ch201, 6pm & 11pm).
ATP Mexican Open Day 3 (Ch201, tomorrow, 6am).

TOMORROW

GOLF
Asian Tour New Zealand Open: Day 1 (StarHub Ch204, 9am).
European Tour Oman Open: Day 1 (Ch204, 2.30pm & 6pm).
LPGA Tour HSBC Women's World Championship: Day 1 (Sentosa Golf Club, New Tanjong Course, 8.30am. Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 10am).

TENNIS
ATP Dubai Championships Day 4 (StarHub Ch201, 7pm).
ATP Mexican Open Day 4 (Ch201, Friday, 7am).

For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

SPORT

HARDEN COOL AS 30-PT RUN ENDS

Beating Hawks matters more to Rockets star than extending his scoring streak in the NBA

HOUSTON (Texas) • James Harden admitted that he had no false ideas about breaking Wilt Chamberlain's record of 65 games with 30 or more points, after the Houston Rockets guard had his 32-game streak snapped in a 119-111 home victory over the Atlanta Hawks on Monday night.

He missed all 10 of his three-point attempts and finished with 28 points after missing last Saturday's win over the Golden State Warriors with a neck injury.

Harden's 32-game run was the second-longest in National Basketball Association (NBA) history.

"It was cool, but I knew I wasn't going to get to No. 1," the 29-year-old said on ESPN after the game at the Toyota Centre.

"I don't care. We won. Made shots, missed shots, we won the game. That streak was great, but I was just doing it because that's what we had to do in order to keep our heads above water.

"We had multiple guys in double figures, which is great to see. Hopefully, we can keep that up."

Harden last finished shy of 30 points on Dec 11 against the Portland Trail Blazers when he tallied 29. During the streak, he scored 50 or more points four times, including a career-high 61 in a win over the New York Knicks on Jan 23.

Earlier on Monday, he assured

fans that he will be fine as he recovers from a cervical strain.

"Every day, it's gotten better. I wasn't able to really move my neck. So it affected me, not in just basketball, but also day-to-day life walking around," he said.

"It's tough to just hold your head up. Hopefully, the pain goes away. I've been getting treatment non-stop."

Harden, who was fined US\$25,000 (S\$33,730) on Saturday for criticising the referees after a loss to the Los Angeles Lakers, has missed just four games this season.

On Monday night, Houston's Chris Paul added 20 points and Eric Gordon hit four three-pointers for 16 points.

The Rockets (35-25) had to overcome a career-high eight three-pointers from rookie Trae Young, who finished with 36 points for the Hawks (20-41).

Houston coach Mike D'Antoni has backed Harden to bounce back from this mini setback.

"Eventually, it was going to have to end one of these days," he said of Harden's streak ending.

"But he's unbelievable. He'll start another one."

In Memphis, Mike Conley finished with 30 points as the Grizzlies (24-38) added to the Lakers' woes this season with a 110-105 victory.

LeBron James had a triple-double and made history despite shooting just eight of 23 from the field.

James, who had 24 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists, became the first player to rank in the top 10 in both the NBA's all-time assists and scoring lists.

Already ranked No. 5 in all-time points coming into the game, the superstar achieved another milestone by recording his 8,525th career assist to surpass Andrew Miller and move into the No. 10 spot.

Brandon Ingram led the Lakers with 32 points and Kyle Kuzma finished with 22 as Los Angeles dropped their fourth game in the last five and fell to 29-31.

In Charlotte, Klay Thompson scored 26 points and DeMarcus Cousins had 24 as the two-time defending champions Golden State defeated the Hornets 121-110.

Kevin Durant delivered 20 points for the Warriors (43-17), who took a 1½ game lead over the Denver Nuggets (41-18) for the top spot in the Western Conference.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS



Houston Rockets guard James Harden driving past Atlanta Hawks centre Dewayne Dedmon to score in their National Basketball Association game at the Toyota Centre on Monday night. Harden finished with 28 points in the 119-111 win, despite missing all 10 of his three-point attempts. PHOTO: REUTERS

Heads will roll if Chinese paddlers are toppled

SHANGHAI • Chinese table tennis has gone on a war footing for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, vowing to dock coaches' pay and demote them if they fail to keep the country at the pinnacle of the sport.

China top the men's, women's and team world rankings, while the country has won all 12 gold medals across the last three Olympics.

But open dissent broke out in

2017 when three of China's top men's paddlers pulled out of a home tournament in protest at the removal of head coach Liu Guoliang.

The highly respected 43-year-old has been back in favour since last autumn and this week labelled himself "commander-in-chief", as the Chinese Table Tennis Association (CTTA) laid out in stark terms its de-

termination to clean up once more in Tokyo.

Speaking at a media conference on Monday, Liu - now CTTA chairman - deployed more militaristic bombast as he "vowed to advance and retreat with the team", according to Xinhua.

The state news agency also reported that the new points-based system of rewards and punish-

ments for coaches under his new regime was also the most stringent in history.

The terms require the Chinese teams to win at least the world championships or the Team World Cup, plus a number of selected tournaments, in order to "pass" in the lead-up to the Games.

These include men's and women's World Cup, Asian Champi-

onships, Asian Cup, China Open, Japan Open and ITTF World Tour Grand Finals.

According to the China Daily, coaches can score points only if the players win gold medals.

The world championships will offer the most number of points - 4,000 this year - with a total of 18,000 up for grabs among all competitions.

A team who score less than 12,000 points will be deemed to have failed.

Liu said that he would forgo his salary for the year if any of the coaches under his watch falls short of the required number of points. "For Chinese table tennis, the only goal in Tokyo is to win," he added.

The coaches will similarly be hit in the pocket and demoted to a lesser post if they fail to reach the benchmark.

As host, Japan will be a major threat at the Games, particularly in team events, Chinese table tennis bosses also warned.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, XINHUA

Obituaries

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14th Anniversary
In Memory Of A Loving Wife



KAREN WONG LAI CHUN
called home to be with the Lord on 27 Feb 2005.
When will I see you again
When will our hearts be united
*Lovingly remembered and cherished by
husband Roger, godson Jason and all loved ones.*

7th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



RISHON WEE ZHENGHAO
Departed on 27 February 2012
*It has been seven painful years
We still missed you very much
We will always remember you
Deeply missed and
forever cherished
Popo, mummy and love ones*

6TH ANNIVERSARY
In Loving Memory Of



ONG LIP TAT
CHRISTOPHER
Departed on 27 February 2013
Dearly missed and lovingly remembered by
Sisters, brother, nieces, nephews
and all relatives.

13th Anniversary
In Loving Memory Of



LAI KEW CHAI
Departed 27/2/2006
*Upright and just in all his ways,
Loyal and true through all his days.
Forever loved and missed by
Dorothy and family*



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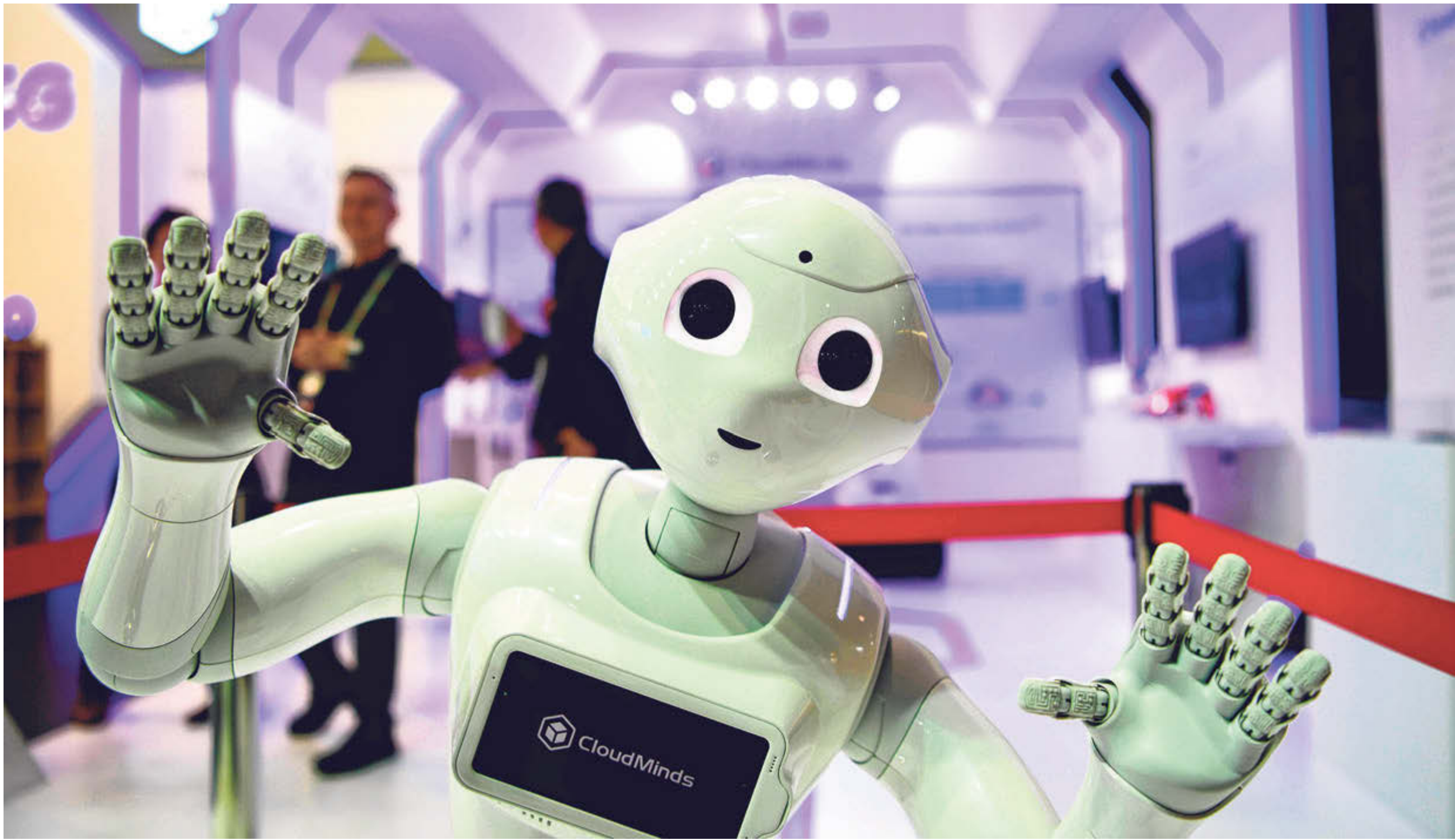
CHINA CONNECTION

What Oscar winners like
Green Book and Bao
have in common

D7

Mobile World Congress

Say hi to the next big thing in smartphones



5G wireless networks and foldable phones dominate the Mobile World Congress, the biggest trade show for mobile technology



Vincent Chang
In Barcelona

The 5G era is here, with the first smartphones built to work on next-generation 5G networks announced at Mobile World Congress, the biggest trade show for mobile technology.

Touting speeds that are 10 to 100 times faster than existing networks, 5G networks would enable consumers to download a 1GB movie in mere seconds compared with over a minute using 4G.

Smartphone makers such as LG, Oppo and Xiaomi all showed off 5G

models, though Xiaomi was one of the first to put a price on a 5G smartphone – €599 (\$\$918).

Huawei, which makes its own 5G modem, also unveiled a 5G smartphone – the Mate X – at Barcelona. It also happens to have a foldable screen – the other major trend in smartphone design this year.

So far, three firms have announced foldable smartphones, which have large flexible displays – typically from 7 to 8 inches – that can be folded into standard smartphone-sized dimensions.

The first, the Royole FlexPai, has been available in China from US\$1,300 (\$\$1,756) since December last year. The Samsung Galaxy Fold, which was announced last week, will be available from April 26 at prices starting from US\$1,980 (\$\$2,675) in the United States. It arrives in Singapore in the second quarter of the year.

At €2,299 (\$\$3,523), Huawei's foldable Mate X is the costliest of the three. It will be available from the middle of the year.

Other smartphone makers are also betting on this form factor – Xiaomi and Oppo have both teased videos and photos of foldable devices, while LG has added an optional second screen accessory for its latest V50 ThinQ handset to double the screen real estate.

It does not take much imagination to see the potential of foldable smartphones.

Standing in a packed train carriage? In its compact form, the foldable smartphone is easy to use with one hand. Unfold the device to play games, watch videos or read the news on a larger screen if you get a seat during your daily commute.

There are other potential benefits, such as having more apps on the screen and better selfies because a foldable phone may not require a front camera anymore.

For those looking to have a single computing device, a foldable phone fits the bill.

A DECADE IN THE MAKING

Samsung Electronics' president and head of research and development, Mr Roh Tae-moon, told The Straits Times in an exclusive interview that it took Samsung about 10 years to develop the technologies to make a foldable smartphone.

"During the development period, different form factors were analysed. Infolding, outfolding, vertical folding, horizontal folding, rotational and rollable."

Mr Roh revealed that the infolding option – where the screen is on the inside – was picked because of its familiarity. "It is an intuitive action that people are familiar with, like

when you open your notebook."

He says another reason for the Galaxy Fold's design is that it would offer the most protection to the screen. Because glass cannot be bent, the foldable display has a surface made from polymer.

The unfolding approach – used by Huawei and Royole in their foldable phones – was the "easiest to implement while infolding was the most challenging", but Samsung went with the latter option because it led to a better user experience, he added.

The size of the Galaxy Fold, which has a 7.3-inch screen, was also the result of much trial and error. "It was about having the right balance between folded and unfolded," says Mr Roh. He explained that when unfolded, the device should offer a nice grip and portability while still being easily usable when folded.

The display's 4:3 aspect ratio was derived after looking into existing and emerging mobile content. This aspect ratio lets Samsung fit three active apps on the screen at the same time.

Mr Roh added that Samsung has been working with partners to create an ecosystem for foldable phones. Google previously announced support for the form factor in the Android mobile operating system.

NOT FOR THE MASSES YET

Foldable phones can live up to a smartphone market that has been increasingly stagnant, says Mr Parv Sharma, an analyst at market research firm Counterpoint Research. "They (foldable smartphones) will help consumers do more with a bigger screen size. This means better productivity and greater content consumption on the go," he says.

Mr Thomas Husson, vice-president at Forrester Research, says that the consumer benefits of foldable phones are still unclear. He says that while "top smartphone brands will claim to have reinvented smartphone design, it will take longer for these foldable experiences to deliver differentiated experiences".

Market research firm Canalys predicts fewer than two million foldable smartphones will ship this year with the high cost of the devices cited as the reason.

"Samsung and Huawei will account for the majority of foldable smartphones shipped in 2019. But high shipment numbers are not the priority. Each vendor wants to prove it can achieve the greatest technological advances with its new industrial designs," says Canalys senior director Nicole Peng.

The Mobile World Congress in Barcelona focused greatly on 5G networks, which is expected to help run autonomous cars and robots.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

vinchang@sph.com.sg

MORE STORIES
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Mobile World Congress

Unlock this phone with your veins

Vincent Chang

You cannot fault LG for lack of innovation as its latest LG G8 ThinQ smartphone, unveiled at Mobile World Congress this week, throws a bunch of interesting technologies at the wall.

With any luck, some of these new features will stick and find traction in the industry. But I am sceptical about a couple of them, namely the Air Motion gestures.

Instead of using your fingers or voice to control the G8 ThinQ, you can control it from a short distance away from the screen using hand gestures. Some of the moves include turning an imaginary dial in mid-air with your hand to control the volume of the device. Other possible commands include taking a screenshot and switching between apps.

Unless you are trying to use the phone while eating fried chicken with both hands, I do not quite see the appeal of these gestures. More-

over, they take a while to get used to, as the gestures need to be executed at the right distance away from the phone, for the G8's Z Camera to capture them.

The Z Camera, which is a time-of-flight camera based on Infineon's 3D image sensor, can accurately record depth information. This capability, together with infrared sensors, enable palm vein authentication.

Dubbed Hand ID, this authentication scheme can identify individuals by recognising the shape and thickness of the veins in their palm. LG says the chances of two persons having an identical vein structure is less than one in one billion, making it less likely to be fooled than with a fingerprint sensor or face recognition.

From what I saw, it is relatively fast, too, once you know where to place your palm over the camera. Face unlock is also supported if the palm method is not your cup of tea.

The Z Camera is also used to enable some nifty camera tricks, such as creating background blur,

or bokeh, for videos and not just photos.

Besides the Z Camera, another innovation is the use of the G8's 6.1-inch OLED screen as a diaphragm, with a motor vibrating the screen to produce sound. This screen also doubles as the phone's earpiece speaker.

The rest of the G8 is more mundane. Like most smartphones this year, it will use Qualcomm's flagship Snapdragon 855 processor. It will have 6GB of memory and 128GB of internal storage. It has a triple camera unit at the back, comprising a camera with a standard lens, a telephoto camera and an ultra-wide angle camera.

But I am somewhat concerned about the 3,500mAh battery, which is on the smaller side. The LG V40 ThinQ did not have the best battery life and the G8 may suffer a similar fate. We will find out when it goes on sale later this year – no price or date has been announced yet.

vinchang@sph.com.sg



The LG G8 ThinQ smartphone has features such as a triple camera unit at the back, comprising a camera with a standard lens, a telephoto camera and an ultra-wide angle camera.

Long-awaited Nokia smartphone has five cameras

The long-rumoured Nokia 9 PureView finally made its debut at the Mobile World Congress this week.

And it did not disappoint, with a unique five-camera system arranged in a circular layout that reminds me of the eyes of an insect or the holes in a lotus seed pod.

Three of the five cameras have monochrome sensors while the other two have RGB colour sensors.

While other smartphone makers have added telephoto and ultra-wide cameras to complement the main camera, the Nokia 9's five cameras all have a 12-megapixel Sony sensor and an f/1.8 aperture. They use Zeiss optics.

HMD Global, which designs and builds Nokia smartphones, says the monochrome sensor captures more details, given that it captures 2.5 times more light compared with the colour sensor. The data from all the cameras, said to range from 60 megapixels to 240 megapixels when taking panoramas is used to create a single 12-megapixel image with lots of details.

This five-camera system also captures a lot of depth information – 1,200 layers – that can be used to change the focus of a photo after it

is taken. The monochrome sensors on this phone will also lead to better dynamic range for photos shot in black and white.

Design-wise, I found the Nokia 9 to be slightly dated compared to other recent Nokia smartphones. For one thing, it does not have a display notch for its 5.99-inch OLED screen while the top and bottom bezels are not the slimmest.

Furthermore, it is powered by last year's flagship Qualcomm Snapdragon 845 processor, not the new 855 model that is found in almost every new smartphone released this year. HMD Global did say it worked with Qualcomm to enable the processor's image signal processor to support five cameras. Perhaps the long incubation period for this device is the reason for its lack of trendiness.

It does have other flagship features, such as wireless charging as well as water and dust resistance (IP67 rated). It also has an optical in-display fingerprint sensor.

The Nokia 9 PureView is expected to be available globally next month and is priced at US\$699 (\$\$943).

Vincent Chang



The Nokia 9 PureView's cameras all have a 12-megapixel Sony sensor and an f/1.8 aperture, with Zeiss optics.

Foldable screen does not come cheap



Arguably the most exciting device at Mobile World Congress this year, the Huawei Mate X was kept behind glass, away from the prying hands of the hordes of journalists.

But while I could not touch it, I did get a very close look at only the third foldable smartphone to be unveiled after efforts from Samsung and Royole.

The Mate X has a thin, squarish foldable OLED screen measuring 8 inches when unfolded. This is slightly larger than the 7.3-inch Galaxy Fold, Samsung's foldable device announced a week ago. Both devices have a flexible polymer layer instead of rigid glass over the screen.

There are other differences. The Mate X resembles a typical smartphone when folded, but with a 6.6-inch screen at the front and a 6.4-inch screen at the back. This asymmetry is because of a sidebar, which acts as a handle for you to grip the phone.

It also houses the camera modules and the USB Type-C charging port.

In contrast, the Galaxy Fold opens like a book and has a second 4.6-inch screen, dubbed Cover Display on its front when closed.

Due to the way it is designed, the Mate Xh has only a single set of Leica-branded cameras – there is no distinction between front and rear. On paper, this should lead to more impressive-looking selfie shots than a standard smartphone because the latter usually has an inferior front camera.

The bonus – there is no display notch because there is no need for one now with this design.

Huawei boasts that the Mate X's patented hinge, which enables the screen to fold completely flat with no space between the two layers unlike the Galaxy Fold's gap, is made of over 100 components. Based on the visuals provided by Huawei, the hinge reminds me of the interlocking links used by the one in the Lenovo Yoga computers.

Like the Galaxy Fold, the Mate X has a side power button, which doubles as a fingerprint sensor.

To accommodate the foldable design, it comes with dual batteries – because batteries cannot yet be folded – for a total capacity of 4,500mAh. This is slightly higher than the 4,380mAh on the Galaxy Fold.

Powering the Mate X is Huawei's Kirin 980 processor, which is also found in its other flagship devices. But Huawei has also added its own Balong 5G chipset, which the Chinese firm says makes the Mate X the world's fastest 5G smartphone. The Galaxy Fold too will have a 5G variant.

There are still question marks over how apps would appear and adapt to the larger unfolded screen, but Huawei plans to sell the Mate X in the middle of the year. Prices will start at €2,299 euros (\$\$3,524) for a model with 8GB memory and 512GB internal storage.

The Huawei Mate X resembles a typical smartphone when folded, but with a 6.6-inch screen at the front and a 6.4-inch screen at the back.

Adjust bokeh effect in videos on the Galaxy S10

Samsung's 5G variant of its flagship Galaxy S10 smartphone was announced last week at the South Korean firm's Unpacked event.

But it was only at Mobile World Congress that Samsung let everyone have a taste of what would likely be one of the first smartphones to support 5G networks.

In terms of design and build, the S10 5G is similar to its stablemates in the series. It is an all-glass smartphone with two hole-punch style front-facing camera at the top right corner.

What is different from the other S10 phones is the size of the OLED display. It is a 6.7-inch QHD+ AMOLED screen, up from the 6.4-inch display on the S10+.

As a result, it feels big in the hand, though not to the same extent as the massive 7.2-inch Huawei Mate 20 X.

The S10 5G also has an extra 3D

depth camera at the back, effectively making it a four-camera phone compared to the three rear cameras on the S10+.

This depth camera and the information it captures is used for a new Live Focus Video feature, which lets you adjust the amount of background blur or bokeh effect in videos by using a slider in the camera app. It is an extra trick that is not possible with other Galaxy S10 phones.

Other S10 features, from the super-fast wireless charging feature to the in-display ultrasonic fingerprint sensor, are present on this 5G variant.

If you live somewhere with 5G networks rolling out in the near future – in other words, not Singapore – a key part of the S10 5G is its support for these fast, next-generation mobile networks.

Depending on the market, the 5G functionality will be enabled by



The Samsung Galaxy S10 is an all-glass smartphone with two hole-punch style front-facing camera at the top right corner, similar to its stablemates in the series.

Qualcomm's X50 modem or Samsung's own 5G modem. The version I tried is powered by Samsung's Exynos processor and has 8GB of memory and 256GB of internal storage. Notably, it does not have a microSD card slot.

Samsung does not have a confirmed release date or pricing details. The former likely depends on

when telcos roll out their 5G networks. You can expect it to cost more than the S10+.

Vincent Chang

A FIRST LOOK AT THE SAMSUNG S10 SERIES on D3

Vincent Chang,

Phones

A first look at the Samsung S10 series

The Samsung Galaxy S10e, S10 and S10+, which feature the latest Exynos 9820 octa-core processor and Android 9.0 Pie mobile operating system, will be launched here on March 8

Trevor Tan

It seems like Samsung has thrown every feature available into its latest flagships, the Galaxy S10e, S10 and S10+.

The S10 smartphones, which will be launched here on March 8, are relatively similar to each other in design, featuring Samsung's latest Exynos 9820 octa-core processor, the latest Android 9.0 Pie mobile operating system, Wi-Fi 6 support, IP68 water and dust resistance, and Samsung's Infinity-O display.

This display has a hole-punch camera design, in which a tiny hole is made near the corner of the screen to accommodate the front-facing camera, thus obviating the need for a screen notch. It is also the first display certified to support the HDR10+ standard for great high dynamic range (HDR) quality.

While the S10 smartphones look like their S9 predecessors from the front (bar the hole-punch), they look like the Samsung Galaxy Note9 phones from the rear with their cameras arranged in a horizontal orientation.

The rear fingerprint sensor found in the S9 and Note9 is gone. Instead, the S10 and S10+ come with an embedded ultrasonic fingerprint sensor under the display, while the S10e has a side capacitive

fingerprint sensor.

Other smartphones use in-display optical fingerprint sensors that recognise a 2-D image of your fingerprint. But an ultrasonic fingerprint sensor here recognises a 3-D image of your fingerprint, which is thus more secure.

However, you cannot just place your finger or thumb anywhere on the display to unlock the screen. Instead, the display will show you where to place your finger, which is near the bottom of the screen.

This ultrasonic fingerprint sensor takes time to get used to. Most times, I was able to unlock the screen almost instantly. But occasionally, it takes a few tries to unlock the screen. I need to press with the right amount of pressure, not too hard and not too soft.

The entry-level model of the series, the S10e, uses a capacitive fingerprint sensor sited at the power button on the right side. This old-school method feels more reliable so far, as it never fails to recognise my fingerprint. Unlocking the screen is also instantaneous.

In terms of handling, the S10e easily beats the other two models. I have to stretch my thumb to access the power button on the right side of the S10+, while I have to curl my thumb to touch the fingerprint sensor with the S10. The size of the S10e – it has the smallest display in the series – is just perfect for one-handed operation.

But the S10e does not have the curved edges of the other two models. It also lacks the rear triple-camera system found in the S10 and S10+ as well as the front-facing dual-camera system found in S10+.

In essence, Samsung has added an ultra-wide-angle camera to all three models. For the S10 and S10+, this new camera goes with the wide-angle and telephoto cameras found in S9+ to make a rear triple-camera unit. For the S10e, it partners the wide-angle camera for a rear dual-camera unit.

This ultra-wide-angle camera pro-

vides a 123-degree point of view, so you can include more into a frame. But while images have more coverage, I notice a clear distortion to the horizon in some of the photos taken. This needs more testing as there are times when no distortion is present.

A new addition to the camera app is the shot suggestion feature. When activated, the camera app will provide on-screen indicators for you to frame your photo better.

In addition, the scene optimiser can better recognise and more accurately process different scenes. For example, when you are taking photos of a page in a book, it will recognise it as text and automatically switch to scan mode for a better shot of the page.

In general, photos shot by the S10 smartphones are sharp and detailed with fairly accurate colour reproduction. But as you might expect from Samsung smartphone cameras, the photos tend to be slightly over-saturated and vivid when auto HDR is turned on.

Like the S9+, the S10 smartphones are able to take Live Focus shots, whereby the subject is in focus but the background is blurred for the bokeh effect.

But Samsung has added different bokeh effects apart from the usual blur effect. You can now select three more options, including spin, zoom and colour point. Spin and zoom provide a nice sense of movement while colour point looks like vignetting.

These effects look far more natural than some over-the-top bokeh effects, such as heart-shape bokeh, offered by some smartphone makers.

I will be putting the S10 smartphones through their paces this week.

Check out the March 6 issue of The Straits Times Life Tech section for a more in-depth review.

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Samsung has added an ultra-wide-angle camera to all three S10 models.

SPECS / SAMSUNG GALAXY S10e

PRICE: \$1,078

PROCESSOR: Exynos 9820 (Quad-core 1.9GHz, Dual-core 2.7GHz, Dual-core 2.3GHz)

DISPLAY: 5.8-inch Full HD+ Dynamic AMOLED, 2,280 x 1,080 pixels, 438 PPI pixel density, HDR10+ certified

OPERATING SYSTEM: Android 9.0 Pie

CAMERA: 16MP f/2.2 ultra-wide-angle, 12MP f/1.5 - f/2.4 wide-angle (rear); 10MP f/1.9 (front)

MEMORY: 128GB (microSD expandable up to 512GB); 6GB RAM

BATTERY: Non-removable 3,100 mAh

WEIGHT: 150g

SAMSUNG GALAXY S10

PRICE: \$1,298

PROCESSOR: Exynos 9820 (Quad-core 1.9GHz, Dual-core 2.7GHz, Dual-core 2.3GHz)

DISPLAY: 6.1-inch Quad HD+ Dynamic AMOLED, 3,040 x 1,440 pixels, 550 PPI pixel density, HDR10+ certified

OPERATING SYSTEM: Android 9.0 Pie

CAMERA: 16MP f/2.2 ultra-wide-angle, 12MP f/1.5 - f/2.4 wide-angle, 12MP f/2.4 telephoto (rear); 10MP f/1.9 (front)

MEMORY: 128GB (microSD expandable up to 512GB); 8GB RAM

BATTERY: Non-removable 3,400 mAh

WEIGHT: 157g

SAMSUNG GALAXY S10+

PRICE: \$1,398 (128GB), \$1,798 (512GB), \$2,198 (1TB)

PROCESSOR: Exynos 9820 (Quad-core 1.9GHz, Dual-core 2.7GHz, Dual-core 2.3GHz)

DISPLAY: 6.4-inch Quad HD+ Dynamic AMOLED, 3,040 x 1,440 pixels, 522 PPI pixel density, HDR10+ certified

OPERATING SYSTEM: Android 9.0 Pie

CAMERA: 16MP f/2.2 ultra-wide-angle, 12MP f/1.5 - f/2.4 wide-angle, 12MP f/2.4 telephoto (rear); 10MP f/1.9, 8MP f/2.2 RGB Depth (front)

MEMORY: 128GB/512GB/1TB (microSD expandable up to 512GB); 8GB/12GB RAM (1TB model only)

BATTERY: Non-removable 4,100 mAh

WEIGHT: 175g (Prism White/Black/Green), 198g (Ceramic White/Ceramic Black)

Wearables

Affordable tracking

Trevor Tan

Along with the local launch of its new View20 smartphone last month, Honor also introduced its smartwatch, the Watch Magic.

In terms of design, it looks like a smaller version of the Huawei Watch GT. Not a surprise as Honor is a subsidiary of Huawei.

It has a 1.2-inch circular AMOLED touchscreen display with a resolution of 390 x 390 pixels, compared with the Watch GT's 1.39-inch, 454 x 454-pixel display. The Watch Magic is also a wee bit thinner (9.8mm versus 10.6mm).

The review unit comes in an all-black design with the shell of the smartwatch made of nylon plastic with a scratch-resistant ceramic surface. There are two buttons on its right.

The bezel has nice numerical markings with a red "tachymeter" wording, scoring brownie points with the sporty crowd. The silicone watch band is black on the exterior and red on the interior. It looks like an analogue timepiece if you pick

the right watch face option.

Like the Watch GT, it uses Huawei's Lite OS mobile operating system. This means only a few apps and watch faces are available. There are 13 watch faces to choose from. And there is currently no third-party support for Lite OS.

The Watch Magic comes with a barometer, digital compass and a built-in heart-rate monitor that provides all-day tracking of the wearer's heart rate. It has a built-in GPS to track runs.

It is water-resistant to a depth of 50m, so you can go swimming with it. It is also able to monitor your sleep.

Navigating through the watch's menu is a breeze, but I find the button functions to be a tad illogical. Usually, the back button is sited at the bottom. But with this smartwatch, the top button is the back button. So it takes getting used to.

Its fitness-tracking performance is average overall. For step tracking, readings are 6.5 per cent off from the readings of my calibrated Apple Watch Series 4. But when using GPS to track a run on my usual 5km

jogging route, its distance measurement is off by around 400m.

For sleep tracking though, the Watch Magic uses the same sleep algorithm as Huawei's Watch GT, which is fantastic.

It produces sleep cycle graphs that break sleep patterns into deep, light and rapid eye movement sleep. It also provides insights to deep sleep continuity and breathing quality during sleep.

Furthermore, it scores your sleep – from 0 to 100 points – and provides tips on how to improve your sleep. For example, it tells me I do not have enough deep sleep and that I should refrain from doing strenuous exercise close to bedtime.

Battery life is rated at seven days with heart-rate monitoring turned on. With the Watch Magic constantly paired to an Android smartphone and with a 5km run tracked using GPS, it showed a battery life reading of 50 per cent at the end of four days. So, battery life is pretty much as advertised, though not as good as the Watch GT's two weeks' battery life.



The Honor Watch Magic comes with a barometer, digital compass, a built-in heart-rate monitor and a built-in GPS to track runs.

The biggest selling point about the Honor Watch Magic is its price. At \$199, it is nearly \$100 cheaper than the Watch GT.

• **Verdict:** The Honor Watch Magic is an incredibly affordable smartwatch that does its job competently.

SPECS

PRICE: \$199

COMPATIBILITY: Smartphones running Android 4.4 and higher or iOS 9.0 and higher

WATER RESISTANCE: 50m

CONNECTIVITY: Bluetooth, Near Field Communications, GPS

WEIGHT: 51g (with silicone watch band)

RATING

FEATURES: 4/5

DESIGN: 4/5

PERFORMANCE: 3/5

BATTERY LIFE: 4/5

VALUE FOR MONEY: 5/5

OVERALL: 3.5/5

Tech Life Hacks

Deliver what smartphone users really want

Forget 5G and foldable phones. Smartphone makers should focus on extending battery life and making better cameras for phones



Trevor Tan

As I scrutinise the new phone launches that were unfolding (pardon the pun) in Mobile World Congress 2019 in Barcelona this week, I cannot help but wonder if the latest 5G and foldable phones are what users really want.

Sure, 5G's electrifying speeds are something to look forward to as more people stream music and videos via Spotify and Netflix.

No one will mind having faster download speeds and smooth streaming.

However, the maturity of 5G networks will take years before people get to truly enjoy the

benefits of 5G's blazing speed. And when it comes to foldable phones with bendable screens, I remain a sceptic. Yes, it may look cool when you unfold a smart phone to unveil a larger screen – like transforming a smartphone into a mini-tablet. But foldable smartphones launched recently have done little to impress me.

The astronomical price – from \$2,700 to \$3,500 – of foldable smartphones means they will be luxury items. Not to mention, these phones now are a tad too thick to be carried around in pockets.

I also wonder how to apply screen protectors or get cases to protect these expensive devices.

Foldable and 5G are good buzzwords that make for easy marketing. But will foldable and 5G phones really help to revive stalling smartphone sales?

Maybe it is time for smartphone makers to deliver what users really want. And I think what smartphone

users really want is longer battery life and better cameras.

In a USA Today survey of 1,303 smartphone buyers in the United States this month, conducted by market research firm SurveyMonkey Audience, 76 per cent of iPhone owners and 77 per cent of Android smartphone users listed longer battery life as one reason to buy a new phone.

While it would be unrealistic to expect the week-long battery life that Nokia phones of old used to provide, I think people will be very happy if their smartphone can last two days between charges.

I know I would be, especially on mornings when I realised I have forgotten to charge my phone the night before.

In the same survey, 57 per cent of iPhone users and 52 per cent of Android smartphone users said a better camera would prompt them to buy a new smartphone.

In this regard, I think users are not looking for more multiple-camera systems.

Smartphone users will still prefer one camera that actually works, compared with a six-camera system that does not deliver.

As proven by the Google Pixel 3, which has a single rear camera but yet performs better than most of its competition, a smartphone camera's performance is not dictated by how many cameras it has.

I feel what users want in a smartphone camera is the ability to capture clean shots at night, perform autofocus fast enough to capture their speedy toddlers and have adequate optical zoom to photograph portraits. All these in a small package.

To be fair to smartphone makers, while longer battery life and better camera might sound simple, they are not easy to achieve.

With current battery technology,

it is not easy to power a smartphone for two days without recharging. Perhaps one way is to make the processor and display more power-efficient than they are currently.

And for better cameras, it is difficult to fight against the laws of physics and optics.

There is a reason DSLR cameras and lenses are usually big and bulky. You need bigger sensors for better image quality, while bigger optics allow for sharper images.

Still, smartphone makers should be concentrating their research and development on these two main areas that users want.

Because if smartphone makers do not give users what they want, users will just hold on to their smartphones longer – something that smartphone makers dread.

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PC

Printer for casual users

Vincent Chang

HP wants to make the home printer less intimidating, soften the edges of this functional device and update it for a modern audience accustomed to interacting with their gadgets using a smartphone or even with their voices.

The result is the Tango, a stylish and compact inkjet printer without USB or Ethernet ports. There is no touchscreen or control panel either, though it has a few buttons to cancel or resume a print job.

My review set, the Tango X, is identical to the base Tango model. But the Tango X costs more as it has a linen cover that folds over and conceals the printer when not in use. I was slightly disappointed the cover does not attach magnetically or otherwise to the printer. Instead, it is held in place by the weight of the printer – a relatively svelte 3.4kg.

Switch the printer on and its lower front edge lights up like a domesticated cousin of Knight Rider's Kitt. The colours, reminiscent of mood lighting, shift among soothing shades of blue, green and amber, depending on the printer status. There is no angry red light to indicate a problem – it blinks amber instead.

As you might imagine, given its lack of ports, the Tango relies on wireless connectivity. It is designed for smartphones, but can be used with Windows and Mac computers.

Simply install the HP Smart app (available on iOS, Android, Windows 10 and macOS) and it will find and add the Tango. It even detected that my Android smartphone lacked a software component and directed me to download it. The app also shows relevant information like the current ink and paper levels.

Its paper tray can hold up to 50 sheets, which is fairly limited. It requires two cartridges – tri-colour and black – and you can order ink from HP via the app.

Because I tested it with an Android smartphone, the app can print only PDF documents. It can print online documents from a linked Google Drive or Dropbox account.

To print Microsoft Office documents using an Android phone, you have to first open them using Google Drive. This is not the case if you are using an iPhone or if you are printing from a PC or Mac computer, as these platforms support Microsoft Office documents.

The Tango can also connect to Facebook or Instagram to print your photos directly from them.

The print quality is decent. Photos have natural colours and fine details, though text has a hint of pixelation.

The print speed seems slightly faster than advertised. On the Normal print quality setting, the Tango printed 13 black-and-white pages in one minute, which is about two pages more than I expected. It also took just a couple of seconds to start printing after I sent the print job from my



SPECS

PRICE: \$270

YIELD: Up to 200 standard pages each black cartridge and 165 pages each tri-colour cartridge

PRINT RESOLUTION: Up to 1,200 x 1,200 dots per inch

SPEED: Up to 11 pages a minute (black), eight pages a minute (colour)

RATING

FEATURES: 3/5

DESIGN: 4/5

PERFORMANCE: 4/5

VALUE FOR MONEY: 3/5

OVERALL: 3.5/5

smartphone – a pleasant surprise.

The Tango does not have a built-in flatbed scanner. Instead, the HP Smart app doubles as a copier and scanner – it uses the smartphone camera to capture the image and software to straighten the edges and make it suitable for printing.

It does the job in a cinch, but the quality falls short of what an all-in-one printer can achieve with its scanning or photocopy functions.

To keep up with the times, the Tango works with smart voice assistants such as Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant and Microsoft Cortana.

I had to register the printer with Google Cloud Print before I could use it with my Google Home smart speaker. But this feature has limited usefulness because you can ask the printer to print only colouring pages, games (it printed a crossword puzzle when I tried this) and Google Calendar. Also, once the printer finished a job, I had to repeat a lengthy voice command to get it to start another, which could be tedious if I have multiple print jobs.

At \$270, the Tango X is more expensive than some of HP's all-in-one inkjet photo printers or monochrome laser ones. If you are a light user who prints more often than scans or copies, the Tango X may be adequate. But most home users will benefit from a printer with more features.

• **Verdict: The easy-to-use Tango X is a good printer but lacks the functions of an all-in-one model.**

New products



Samsung Galaxy Tab S5e

TABLET

Pricing to be confirmed, available in the second quarter of this year

Measuring 5.5mm thick, the Galaxy Tab S5e is Samsung's thinnest tablet yet. And it weighs just 400g.

Yet, this Android tablet manages to pack a 10.5-inch Super AMOLED display (2,506 x 1,600 pixels) and an octa-core processor, with up to 6GB of system memory. It comes with internal storage of up to 128GB and storage can be expanded to 512GB via a microSD card.

Plus, it is said to have a long-lasting battery life of up to 14½ hours. It will be available here in gold and black.

Logitech G933s 7.1 Lightsync

WIRELESS GAMING HEADSET

\$299

Featuring Logitech's Pro-G 50mm drivers, the G933s 7.1 Lightsync wireless gaming headset is said to deliver deep bass, clean highs and a highly detailed cinematic sound.

It features DTS Headphone:X 2.0, a surround-sound technology that simulates the 3D environment of compatible audio, thus allowing you to know the direction of approaching enemies or shots.

You can use the gaming headset wirelessly with a 2.4GHz wireless USB dongle or in the usual wired way via a 3.5mm audio jack.



Synology DiskStation DS1019+

NETWORK-ATTACHED STORAGE

\$1,019 (without hard drives)

This five-bay desktop network-attached storage features a quad-core processor, 8GB of system memory and dual M.2 NVMe solid-state storage (SSD) slots. Thus, you can install M.2 NVMe SSD cache for super-fast performance without occupying any of the bay drives.

The DS1019+ can be expanded to 10 drive bays with expansion units for a storage capacity of up to 140TB. It has sequential writing and reading speeds of more than 225MB per second.



Pioneer DMH-ZS8250BT

IN-CAR MULTIMEDIA RECEIVER

\$1,149

Many in-car multimedia receivers have specific dimensions, such as single-DIN or double-DIN, but not the latest Pioneer DMH-ZS8250BT.

This modular system can be installed in single-DIN, double-DIN or even non-DIN configurations.

DIN stands for Deutsches Institut für Normung, the German standards organisation that created the original standard for car head units that people still use today.

The receiver features a large 8-inch touchscreen display which makes viewing easy and supports both Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, so you can mirror your smartphone's features on it.

Paw Patrol Uni Headphone

OVER-EAR HEADPHONES

\$26.90

If your kids love the Paw Patrol cartoon series, this pair of over-ear headphones will spark a lot of joy without hurting their ears.

The Paw Patrol Uni Headphone has 30mm drivers with sound level restricted to 85dB, which is generally regarded as the limit when sound becomes harmful.

This prevents children from turning up the volume too high. It has an adjustable headband with the ear cups made of anti-allergic soft fabric.



Fujifilm X-T30

MIRRORLESS CAMERA

\$1,399 (body only), availability to be confirmed

Fujifilm has added another model to its critically acclaimed X-series of mirrorless cameras, with the compact and lightweight X-T30.

Despite weighing a mere 383g (body only), the retro DSLR-like mirrorless camera is equipped with Fujifilm's latest X-Trans CMOS 4 26.4-megapixel image sensor and X-Processor 4 image processing engine, and is capable of shooting up to 30 frames per second. You can compose photos using either its built-in electronic viewfinder or tiltable 3-inch display.



Compiled by Trevor Tan



From far left: Scott Foley, Lauren Cohan and Tyler James Williams star in Whiskey Cavalier. PHOTO: WARNER TV

Showing the softer side of spies

The creator of Whiskey Cavalier got the idea for the series from a friend who works in counter-terrorism

Alison de Souza
In Los Angeles

Tough guys and super spies cry over break-ups too – that is the premise of a new comedy drama, Whiskey Cavalier, inspired by a real-life Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent.

Its creator, David Hemingson, got a 2am call one night from that agent, who is a good friend of his. He imagined the worst, especially as the man works in counter-terrorism.

But all he wanted was to talk about his relationship and that planted a seed that grew into Hemingson's new show, which airs on Thursdays at 9pm on Warner TV (Singtel TV Channel 306 and StarHub TV Channel 515).

Scott Foley plays federal agent Will Chase, who is still licking his wounds from a failed relationship, when he is paired with Central Intelligence Agency operative Frankie Trowbridge, played by Lauren Cohan, and the two have to

work together to save the world.

Speaking to The Straits Times and other media in Los Angeles last month, Hemingson recalls the late-night telephone call that began it all.

"When a call comes at 2am, you're, like, 'Who died? Oh my god, are you okay?'"

"But he says, 'Listen. I'm breaking up with my girlfriend, I'm having a hard time.' I'm thinking: This guy just thwarted a terrorist attack. This guy is the first guy through the door, gun out and up – he is an American hero. And he's calling me about his break-up with his girlfriend."

That was when the writer-producer – who worked on the comedy series

Don't Trust the B**** In Apartment 23 (2012 to 2013) – realised spies are just like everyone else in some ways.

"At the end of the day, what he wants is what we all want, which is love and connection. I started thinking: Why do we always portray these guys as cold, hard lotharios?"

"Why aren't we portraying these men and women as people who are desperate to trust somebody and urgently want connection?"

The series will show the softer side of agent Chase even as it has him doing high-stakes spy work in exotic locales across Europe.

The two leads, Foley and Cohan, had to juggle these action-hero elements with the comedy, as well as romantic tension between their characters, who do not get along initially.

Foley – who played a spy on a more serious show, Scandal (2013 to 2018) – also had to portray his character in the early, weepy stages of his break-up, in which he drowns his sorrows in beer and pizza and sings along to ballads like Total Eclipse Of The Heart.

A reporter asks how long Chase will be moping around like this. "What's your problem with emotion, man?" jokes Foley, 46.

"I think he carries the weight of the experience with him, but it's not a constant in the episodes you're going to see in the first season," he adds.

"It was a great way to introduce a different side to a leading action man and I thought it was an interesting way to jump into the show."

The actor, who appeared in the popular drama, Felicity (1998 to 2002), believes it is high time television embraces a different kind of male action hero.

"The men whom we know to save the world on the television shows we grew up on" are usually "stoic" and "unrelatable", he observes. But the one he plays here "is modern and more interesting".

Cohan, best known for her 2011 to 2018 stint on zombie show The Walking Dead, enjoyed the opportunity to get physical and emotional for the series.

The 37-year-old says: "It's exhilarating. What makes the show special is we get to go into the emotional territory. We get to go into the comedic territory, then we do probably two or three giant set pieces with a stunt every single episode."

"These characters sort of turn out to have a whole repertoire of skills with everything. It's awesome."

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• Whiskey Cavalier airs on Thursdays at 9pm on Warner TV (Singtel TV Channel 306 and StarHub TV Channel 515).



Exclusively for subscribers of The Straits Times

WIN a dinner for two at Spring Court Restaurant

As part of Asian Masters 2019, which returns for its seventh edition from March 1, 2019 to Feb 29, 2020, The Straits Times is giving away a seven-course dinner at Spring Court Restaurant.

At this exclusive session, hosted by The Straits Times senior food correspondent Wong Ah Yoke, savour a delectable array of food, paired with a hand-picked selection of wine. The seven-course dinner at this local heritage restaurant features the Spring Court traditional popiah, traditional double-boiled bird's nest in whole chicken and crispy crabmeat roll with chicken liver and salted egg yolk.

The Straits Times is giving away five pairs of passes to the dining session on March 12 at 7pm. Each pair is worth \$416 ++.

How to win

1. Download the SPH Rewards app.
2. Look for the giveaway in the Rewards section.
3. Press the "JOIN" button and answer this question: The dinner on March 12 at Spring Court Restaurant features wine-pairing on its menu. True or False

The contest ends on March 4. Terms and conditions apply.



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The Clintons finally hit Broadway

NEW YORK • On the Fourth of July weekend in 2015, while Mrs Hillary Clinton campaigned in New Hampshire for the United States Democratic presidential nomination, theatregoers in Falmouth, Massachusetts, got a look at a work in progress about her – playwright Lucas Hnath's play, Hillary And Clinton, now poised for Broadway.

Set in an alternate universe during the 2008 primaries, as she fights for survival against a charismatic upstart, it was a comic tragedy, and it could not have been more topical.

Hal Brooks, artistic director of the Cape Cod Theatre Project, remembers his audiences loving the series of staged readings. But he was so sure of the real Mrs Clinton's odds in 2016 that when he thought about the future of this play, rooted as it was in a failed White House run, he had a concern.

He said: "Once she's president, will anybody really be interested?"

Needless worry, that. Bad news for Mrs Clinton seems to have been a stroke of luck for the play.

Starring Laurie Metcalf as Hillary and John Lithgow as Bill, and directed by Joe Mantello, Hillary And Clinton arrives at the Golden Theatre next month amid a raucous cultural debate about gender politics and the double standard that women face.

Not a bad outcome, but a surprising one for a play that was written in 2008 and had to wait eight years for its world premiere – until Mrs Clinton was once again waging a primary campaign. Directed by Chay Yew, it opened at Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago in April 2016.

Charles Isherwood, writing about that production in The New York



Alice Gattling and John Procaccino as the titular characters in the 2016 Philadelphia Theater Company production of Hillary And Clinton. PHOTO: NYTIMES

Times, said Hillary And Clinton found Hnath in "unusually cautious" form.

But Chris Jones, in the Chicago Tribune, called the play "audacious, whip-smart, highly entertaining" and "an important piece of writing".

It is a play that ponders how publicly tough Hillary has to be, how tender she can afford to be and whether it is possible to strike a balance that will not risk condemnation.

Guarded and battle-scarred though she is, the Hillary in the play is not quite the Mrs Clinton from the news. The same goes for the men around her – her husband, Bill, though he is still a thousand times more cavalier than she will ever be; her opponent, Barack (known in earlier versions of the play as The

Other Guy); and her strategist, Mark Penn.

Like Hnath's other plays about famous figures (Walt Disney and Isaac Newton), Hillary And Clinton blends fiction with fact, aiming to subvert what audience members think they already know.

All of the show's full productions leading up to Broadway have cast Hillary as an African-American woman, a directorial choice not required by the script.

In his notes for the published Hillary And Clinton in 2017, Hnath sounds almost eager to discover how the play comes across to audiences without a Clinton candidacy hanging in the balance.

"Tread carefully," he writes.

Hillary – the one in his world, like the real one – knows that stage direction well. NYTIMES

Cheeky spin on Karl Lagerfeld's classics

This year's Paris Fashion Week kicked off with a nod to the creations of the late designer

PARIS • Paris women's fashion week started on Monday with fashionistas in a sombre mood following the death of legendary designer Karl Lagerfeld last week.

His right-hand woman at Chanel, Ms Virginie Viard, who has taken over the reins at the label, will present what is officially his final collection on the last day of the shows next Tuesday.

It is still not clear how much of the collection was created by Lagerfeld, who died last Tuesday aged 85.

He had leaned heavily on Ms Viard, his head of studio, in his final months.

The workaholic German, who always insisted that he would design until he dropped, drew his creations by hand, then handed them to Ms Viard to realise.

"I understand him and can sublimate what he wants to do and bring to Chanel," she said in a 2015 interview on what made the duo tick.

Their three-decade partnership was the motor that drove a constant reinvention of the brand during Lagerfeld's 37 years in charge.

The creator was cremated last Friday "without ceremony" – as he had requested – in the presence of Ms Viard and a handful of his closest friends, including Princess Caroline of Monaco and fashion's most powerful man, LVMH tycoon Bernard Arnault.

Chanel would not comment on whether next week's show will include an homage to Lagerfeld, saying only that "a farewell ceremony will take place at a later date".

Under Lagerfeld, Chanel staged spectacular shows at the vast Grand Palais in central Paris.

But illness stopped him from attending its haute couture show there last month – the first time he missed a Chanel show – with Ms Viard taking the bow at the end.

At last October's spring-summer show, Lagerfeld went out of his way to acknowledge Ms Viard, who took the bow alongside him.

The Decorative Arts Museum in Paris has put on display four of Lagerfeld's most famous creations for Chanel and Chloe, which he also transformed, in the first official tribute to his creative genius.

Internet resale sites have reported a huge spike in interest for Lagerfeld's work since his death.

Such is the kaiser's enduring influence, that youthful Berlin-based label Ottolinger led its show on Monday with a series of acid-tinged tartan twin set outfits that were a cheeky millennials' take on Lagerfeld's Chanel classics.

Its Swiss creators, Christa Bosch and Cosima Gadiant, also took a leaf out of Lagerfeld's book by wittily batting off the comparison.

"No, we thought of them first," they jokingly said.

With British designer Phoebe Philo talked of as a possible successor at Chanel, one of her former acolytes at Celine, South Korea-born Rok Hwang, kicked off fashion week's nine packed days with a highly assured Paris debut.

The London-based creator – who grew up in a caravan in Austin, Texas – won the prestigious LVMH special prize last year, and the deconstructed trench coats and fluid paisley scarf dresses in his autumn/winter collection won him more fans in the French capital.

His designs for his own Rokh label have more than a little of Philo's quiet, minimalist sophistication and he



clearly has a talent for making the edgy seem wearable and mainstream.

The ghost of Philo also seemed to haunt some of the looks of the later Jacquemus show.

All eyes later in the week will be on debut collections for new designers at three major French historic labels – Lacoste, Lanvin and Nina Ricci.

Louise Trotter brings a rock-solid reputation to Lacoste from her years at Joseph, Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger.

The Sunderland-born designer cut her teeth at British high-street label Whistles before crossing the Atlantic after being snapped up by Gap.

France's longest-running but troubled couture house, Lanvin, passes into the hands of young French designer Bruno Sialelli, while radical Dutch couple Rushemy Botter and Lisi Herrebrugh present their first collection since taking over Nina Ricci.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



On show on Monday at Paris Fashion Week were designs by French label Jacquemus (above left) and Berlin-based label Ottolinger (above).

PHOTOS: EPA-EFE

Malaysia's Crockfords Hotel awarded five-star Forbes Travel Guide rating

Desiree Loh

Less than two years after it opened in 2017, Crockfords Hotel at Resorts World Genting has become the first hotel in Malaysia to hold a five-star Forbes Travel Guide rating – the highest honour awarded by the global rating system.

The luxury establishment was one of 210 hotels around the world which received the five-star distinction, when the 61st edition of the Forbes Travel Guide Star Ratings was announced last Wednesday in New York.

To qualify for a five-star Forbes Travel Guide rating, hotels must receive a rating of at least 90 per cent in all inspection categories, which include hotel service and facility quality.

With this rating, Crockfords Hotel joins the ranks of hotels such as Mandarin Oriental in Singapore and The Ritz-Carlton in Hong Kong.

Mr Edward Holloway, executive vice-president of leisure and

hospitality at Resorts World Genting, said: "To be rewarded the five-star rating is a confirmation that our vision for luxury at Resorts World Genting works."

"But more than that, this award is great, not just for us, but for Malaysia as well."

"It is an affirmation that Malaysia, as a destination, has luxury service on a par with the world's best, with service and standards that meet the highest level of demands."

The swanky hotel at Resorts World Genting is nestled among the clouds 1,830m above sea level and boasts 18 signature suites that come in three themes.

There are also 111 superior rooms, eight junior suites and three executive suites.

All suites are equipped with a private steam bath.

The hotel offers a suite furnished with a high-end Italian gym system and another that incorporates a zen tea-ceremony space.

It also has a mahjong suite, which includes an automatic built-in mahjong table.



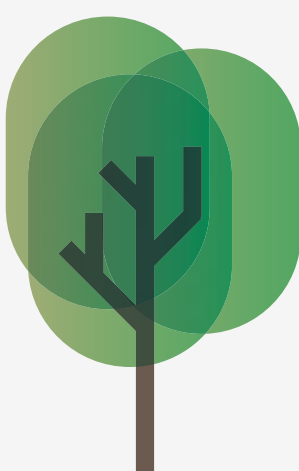
Crockfords Hotel at Resorts World Genting is the first hotel in Malaysia to be awarded a five-star rating by Forbes Travel Guide. PHOTO: RESORTS WORLD GENTING



What's Good
LOOKING AT THE UPSIDE

Share the upside of life in ST's Facebook group
str.sg/whatsgood

Read positive stories at our microsite
str.sg/stwhatsgood



91ST ACADEMY AWARDS

In Green Book victory, critics see an old Hollywood tale

Is the academy taking a step back by honouring the segregation-era buddy film that some people see as borderline bigoted?

LOS ANGELES • Something seismic was happening during the Academy Awards ceremony on Sunday.

The Hollywood establishment, excoriated for its longtime exclusion of women and minorities, recognised African-American production design and costume virtuosos for the first time. Asian-American film-makers were honoured. A movie about a gay rock star collected four trophies.

“I want to thank the academy for recognising a film centred around an indigenous woman,” Alfonso Cuarón said as he accepted the award for best director for Roma, about a domestic worker in Mexico City.

But then came Green Book. In a choice that prompted immediate blowback – from, among others, director Spike Lee, who threw up his hands in frustration and started to walk out of the theatre – the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences gave the best picture Oscar to a segregation-era buddy film.

While admired by some as a feel-good depiction of people uniting against the odds, the movie was criticised by others as a simplistic take on race relations, both woefully retrograde and borderline bigoted.

It was the ultimate Lucy-pulling-away-the-football moment for those who had hoped the film academy was going to reveal itself as a definitively progressive organisation. That the 2017 selection of Moonlight as best picture was not a fluke. That the efforts to diversify its membership – albeit still 69 per cent male and 84 per cent white – had been transformational.

Adding to the anger over Green Book were the other choices available.



Mahershala Ali (far left) and Viggo Mortensen celebrate after Green Book won the Best Picture award. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ryan Coogler’s Black Panther was a cultural and commercial phenomenon, shattering a myth about the overseas viability of movies with Afrocentric storylines. Roma, a nuanced examination of class that was made by an almost entirely Latino cast and crew, had been showered with honours at the pre-Oscars award shows.

And Lee’s BlacKkKlansman, about an African-American police officer who infiltrates the Ku Klux Klan with the help of a Jewish surrogate, was a chance for the academy to recognise one of cinema’s singular, groundbreaking film-makers – one who had been repeatedly overlooked in the past.

“A lot of people may have allowed their expectations of the academy to become too great,” said Dr Todd Boyd, a cinema and media studies professor at the University of Southern California who focuses on

popular culture and race. “We can see some signs of changes, but there has not been a full transformation.”

Green Book, based on a true story, focuses on a working-class Italian-American man (Viggo Mortensen, nominated for best actor) who gets a job as a chauffeur and bodyguard for a gay African-American pianist (Mahershala Ali, who won the Oscar for best supporting actor). As they drive through the South in 1962, the mismatched men begin to realise they have common ground. At one point, they bond over fried chicken.

“The whole story is about love,” Peter Farrelly, the film’s director and one of its writers, said in his best-picture acceptance speech. “It’s about loving each other despite our differences and finding the truth about who we are. We’re the same people.”

That message resonated with many people, including black cinema standouts like writer-director John Singleton (Boyz n the Hood, 1991) and Octavia Spencer, an Oscar winner in 2012 for The Help, who served as a Green Book executive producer.

Green Book received an A-plus grade from ticket buyers in CinemaScore exit polls and has become a modest hit, collecting US\$144 million (S\$194 million) worldwide for Universal Pictures and Participant Media.

Despite pre-Oscars backing for Green Book, vocal supporters were hard to find after it won. A half-dozen academy members declined to be interviewed on Monday about the film’s victory, including several who supported Green Book.

Several lamented that the Oscars were no longer about movies but rather advocacy.

Others in Hollywood spent the day scratching their heads and wondering if Green Book had won simply because it was a studio-backed film. Roma was released by Netflix – largely skipping theatres – and some voters seemed unready to crown the streaming service.

It was also possible that Green Book benefited from the academy’s complicated “preferential” voting system for best picture, in which nominees are ranked first through eighth, and the second- and third-place positions can carry as much weight as first place.

Cries of foul, however, were plentiful.

Dr Boyd said that, in part, he saw the selection of Green Book as push-back by older, more conservative voters. “There are inherently people in the academy who think the organisation’s diversity efforts are going too far,” he said. NYTIMES

OSCAR PERFORMANCE SPARKS TALK OF LADY GAGA, BRADLEY COOPER ROMANCE: Page D9

The Chinese connection linking Oscar films



LOS ANGELES • What do the films Green Book, Bao, Minding The Gap and Free Solo – either nominees or winners at the 91st Academy Awards – have in common?

They may fall into different categories, but each of them is connected to China in its own way: either involving directors of Chinese origin or with Chinese fund support in production.

A palpable undertone to this year’s Academy Awards is the growing presence of Chinese companies and film-makers of Chinese origin in the global entertainment scene.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the global entertainment industry is one of the frontlines where these connections are playing out, in ways that are mes-

merising and enriching.

The last and biggest highlight at Hollywood’s Dolby Theatre on Sunday was Green Book, co-produced by China’s Alibaba Pictures, scooping the award for Best Picture.

Alibaba Pictures has become the first Internet film company that has co-produced an Oscar best picture winner, the film division of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba said on Weibo, China’s popular microblogging website.

Alibaba Pictures has announced that the segregation-era road trip drama that takes place in the American South will be released in China on Friday.

Green Book’s entrance and potential success, given its newly acquired Oscar fame in the Chinese

market, is a positive sign of the growing maturity of China’s film market. Aside from big-name blockbusters from companies such as Disney and Marvel, other films dealing with serious topics can also compete for a share of the huge Chinese market.

Directors of Chinese origin also won recognition at Hollywood’s biggest night.

Bao, an animated short film about a lonely Chinese mother who befriends a baozi (bun) that comes to life, saw its Chinese-Canadian director Domee Shi take the Oscar statuette home for Best Animated Short Film.

The eight-minute short film premiered alongside Incredibles 2 and, before its Oscar win, had won acco-

lades for its ability to connect emotionally with audiences using the familiar tropes of family and food. The film’s success can be attributed to the fact that it communicated universally understood values in an easily accessible format.

“To all of the nerdy girls out there who hide behind your sketchbooks, don’t be afraid to tell your stories,” Shi said when she accepted the award.

Chinese-American director Bing Liu’s film Minding The Gap, which was nominated for Best Documentary Feature, is also worth mentioning.

It may have lost to heavy favourite Free Solo, which incidentally also boasts two directors of partial Chinese origin, but it has won

the Jury Award for Breakthrough Filmmaking at the Sundance Film Festival last year.

Minding The Gap tells the story of three young men of different backgrounds who are brought together by their shared passion for skateboarding. Its success proves themes like companionship can cross cultural and racial boundaries and help a film gain traction in international markets.

The Oscars this year can be viewed as the starting point for a new period of growing influence for China in the international film industry, as more Chinese companies, film-makers, directors and actors play an increasingly bigger role in the interconnected global entertainment industry. XINHUA

From far left: Minding The Gap, by Chinese-American director Bing Liu; Bao, by Chinese-Canadian director Domee Shi; and Green Book, which is co-produced by Alibaba Pictures. PHOTOS: SHAW ORGANISATION, YOUTUBE.COM

Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Bondi Harvest With Guy Turland (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Home Cooking (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd (SC)
2.30 Arts 21 (Cul)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
4.00 Rojak (PG) (SC)
4.30 Survivor 37 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
7.30 MasterChef Junior USA 5 (CC) (V) (Season Premiere)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 With Highlights From Parliament
9.45 Emergency! (CC) (IE) (Premiere)
10.15 Land Unlimited (CC) (IE)
11.10 Scorpion 2 (HD) (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Lion Moms (PG) (D)
1.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
2.20 Hawaii Five-O 7 (PG) (D)
3.10 Lethal Weapon (PG) (D)
4.10 Bondi Harvest With Guy Turland (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Home Cooking (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 Ah Ma Can Cook (V)
7.00 The Best Of Food Source 3 (V)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (CA)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (CA)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)

10.00 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 2017 (IE)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Street Smart 2 (V)
1.00 News 8 At One
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 New Doraemon (S)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 The Golden Path (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 When Duty Calls (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (CA)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 A Sweet Taste Of Art (CC) (IE)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight With Highlights From Parliament
10.45 Garden Of Treasures 3 (CC) (IE)
11.15 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.15 The Princess Weiyong (PG) (D)
1.15 Days Of Disaster (IE)
2.15 Fiery Passion (D)
4.10 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Scrum! (PG) (CC) (D)
4.00 Guess Who 5 (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D) (Finale)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Schools Unlimited (CC) (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight With Highlights From Parliament
11.45 Schools Unlimited (CC) (IE)
AM
12.40 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.35 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Undercover Asia 6
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 When We Play
2.00 News Now

4.02 Undercover Asia 6
5.00 News Now
7.02 When We Play
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Champions For Change
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 When We Play
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 India's Game Changers
1.02 Champions For Change
2.00 News Now
2.30 Asia Exposed 2
3.02 Undercover Asia 6
4.00 News Now
4.30 India's Game Changers
5.02 Champions For Change
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samalay 4 (IE)
3.30 Anjaripetti 5 (Cul)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Vasantham Express 5 (IE)
5.30 Mighty Raju Animation Series (S)
6.00 Ishq Ka Rang Safed (PG) (D)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru (CC) (IE)
7.30 Mella Thiranthathu Kathavu 3 (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Ethiroli 15 (HD) (CC) (CA)
9.30 Theerpugal 4 (PG) (CC) (IE)
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (D)
10.30 Nijangal (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 Maalai Maalai Vasantham (V)
11.30 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Justin Time (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (P)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (P)

1.00 Rob The Robot (P)
1.30 Justin Time (P)
2.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (P)
3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (S)
4.30 Shutterbugs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Alvin!!! & The Chipmunks (S)
6.00 Transformers Rescue Bots (S)
6.30 Before I Was Awesome (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (CC) (S)
7.30 Miraculous: Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir (CC) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (CC) (C)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 ATP 250: Open 13 Provence 2019 (Sports) (Delayed)
11.00 Battle Of The Network Stars (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Bibik-Bibikku (PG) (D)
5.00 Rapuh (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Oh My Family (CC) (S)
6.30 Top 5 Makan (CC) (IE)
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (News)
8.30 Detik (PG) (CA)
9.00 Alah Abang, Amboi Kakak (PG) (CC) (IE)
9.30 Hilang Kasih Di Sarajevo (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Bingit 2 (PG) (D)
11.30 Berita (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs;
CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture;
D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies;
P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance;
R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom;
V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Things are up in the air, but as long as you feel centred, you should be able to cope with them all.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Your ideals are out in the open, so make sure you are doing what you can to advance them.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Someone is not being clear about his needs or desires and you need to get closer to figure him out.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

You are going through some career-related troubles that might feel much bigger than they really are.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)

Before you rush out to try to fix whatever is going wrong with your people, you need to really listen.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Your creative energy is helping you to refine rather than build. It is an important part of the process.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Your emotions are a little out of whack, so find a way to get your friends to support you.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Your ideas do not go unchallenged. This is good as it forces you to strengthen your arguments.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Avoid spending money as much as you can as it is likely to haunt you. Things should get better soon.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Show off a little – results do matter and you know you are doing well. Make sure to give others props too.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

Avoid unwanted attention. Your energy is better spent on personal, private activities.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)

Make sure you speak out as you could be the only one who sees the situation for what it really is.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Weekdays With Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Weekdays With Charmaine Yee
4.00 On The Drive Home With Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 Glenn & The Flying Dutchman
10.00 The Midday Brew With Charmaine Phua
PM
1.00 Afternoon Tune Up With Cheryl Miles
4.00 The Weekday Getaway With Divian Nair
8.00 Love Songs With Simon Lim

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker & Finance Presenter Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7:15am/7:20pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 1:21am/1:41pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 4:11am (2.6m), 11:09am (0.9m), 5:54pm (2.2m), 10:56pm (1.6m). Desaru: 3:45am (2.4m), 10:41am (1.1m), 5:46pm (2.3m), 11:28pm (1.9m). Port Dickson: 6:33am (0.9m), 11:58am (1.7m), 5:59pm (0.7m). Mersing: 2:59am (2.4m), 10:02am (1.1m), 5:33pm (2.7m), 11:41pm (2.1m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 5:03am (2.5m), 12:35pm (1m), 8:15pm (2.1m). Desaru: 4:26am (2.3m), 11:54am (1.1m), 7:50pm (2.3m). Port Dickson: 12:54am (1.9m), 7:54am (1.1m), 1:08pm (1.5m), 7:32pm (0.9m). Mersing: 3:34am (2.3m), 10:56am (1.2m), 6:53pm (2.7m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.00 Storage Wars 11
8.30 Swamp People 8
9.30 Mountain Men 7
10.25 Forged In Fire 4
11.20 Storage Wars 11
11.45 Storage Wars: Texas 5
PM
12.15 Genius
1.10 Swamp People 8
2.05 Pawn Stars 18
2.35 Storage Wars: Texas 6
3.00 Storage Wars 11
3.55 Storage Wars: Texas 5
4.25 Forged In Fire 4
5.20 Mountain Men 7
6.15 Swamp People 9
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
8.05 History Drama: Project Blue Book
9.00 Ancient Aliens 10
9.55 History Drama: Project Blue Book
10.50 Hunting Hitler 2
11.45 Genius

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
10.00 Glam Masters
11.00 Upi Pretty
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 7
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 Forgotten Evil
3.35 Love At First Flight
4.30 Who Runs The World With Mongchin
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Top Chef Jr
7.00 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family 2
7.30 Married At First Sight Australia 4
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 His Perfect Obsession
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
9.20 Batman Vs Two-Face (PG)
10.30 Victoria & Abdul (PG)
PM
12.20 Game Night (NC16)
1.55 Ingrid Goes West (NC16)
3.35 Failure To Launch (PG)
5.10 Robin Hood (PG)
7.30 Pitch Perfect 3 (NC16)
9.00 Father Figures (NC16)
10.50 True Detective 3 (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
6.20 Encrypt
7.50 Justice League Dark (NC16)
9.05 Kull The Conqueror
10.40 Driven
PM
12.35 The Last Boy Scout (NC16)
2.15 Catwoman
4.00 Back To The Future Part II

5.45 John Grisham's The Rainmaker
8.00 The Untouchables
10.00 Back To The Future Part III

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
9.15 Downy (HD)
10.15 Viva La Romance (HD)
PM
12.15 Still Loving You (HD)
1.30 Chicago Typewriter (HD)
2.45 The King Vs The King 2 (HD)
4.45 Still Loving You (HD)
6.00 Downy (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Chinese Restaurant 2 (HD)
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
6.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Abierto Mexicano Telcel Presentado Por HSBC 2019: Day 2
PM
2.00 Table Tennis: Seamaster 2019 ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Men's Quarter-finals, Women's & Men's Doubles Finals
6.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships 2019: Day 3 (Last 16 Session 1)
10.00 Tennis: Deuce 2019
10.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019
11.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships 2019: Day 3 (Last 16 Session 2)

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
9.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG) (Live)
11.00 Magazine: National Icon 2019
11.30 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Singapore Slingers Vs Westports Malaysia Dragons
2.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Westports Malaysia Dragons Vs Mono Vampire Basketball Club (Live)
4.30 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
5.30 Football: Ladbroke's Scottish Premiership 2018/19 Highlights
5.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Semi-finals 1 Leg 1 Lazio Vs Milan
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport TV
8.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 CLS Knights Indonesia Vs Singapore Slingers (Live)
10.00 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13)
AM
12.00 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
1.00 Magazine: Omnisport TV
1.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Semi-finals 1 Leg 1 Lazio Vs Milan
3.30 Football: Ladbroke's Scottish Premiership 2018/19 Highlights
3.55 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Semi-finals 2 Leg 1 Fiorentina Vs Atalanta (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzly And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernooobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
3.00 Rat-A-Tat
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Craig Of The Creek
6.00 Ben 10
6.30 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzly And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 Hawaii Five-0 7
6.50 Seal Team
7.40 American Ninja Warrior 7
9.25 Hawaii Five-0 7
10.20 Seal Team
11.10 The Amazing Race 30
PM
1.00 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
1.55 American Ninja Warrior 7
2.50 Hawaii Five-0 7
3.45 Seal Team
4.35 The Amazing Race 30
6.25 The Blacklist 6
8.10 NCIS: Los Angeles 8
10.00 Seal Team 2
10.55 Supernatural 14
11.50 NCIS: Los Angeles 8

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 Blindspot 3
6.50 Major Crimes 5
7.40 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow 3
8.30 Person Of Interest 4
9.20 The Flash 4
10.10 Blindspot 3
11.00 Almost Genius
11.50 Race To The Scene
PM
12.40 Arrow 7
1.30 The Big Bang Theory 11
1.55 Friends 10

2.20 Blindspot 3
3.10 Almost Genius
4.00 The Flash 4
4.50 Person Of Interest 4
5.40 Major Crimes 5
6.30 The Flash 4
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 11
7.45 Friends 10
8.10 Almost Genius
9.00 Lethal Weapon 3
9.50 Pacific Rim

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.55 Just For Laughs Gags 14
7.20 Mr Bean
7.50 Most Ridiculous 2
8.15 Amazingness
8.35 Mr Bean
9.05 Caraoke Showdown
9.30 Just For Laughs Gags 14
9.55 Hot In Cleveland 3
10.45 Mr Bean
11.15 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.05 The Daily Show 24
12.30 Live At Gotham: Bobby Lee
1.15 The Comedy Jam
2.05 Saturday Night Live 43
2.55 Dr Ken
3.25 Just Another Immigrant: Romesh Ranganathan
3.55 Ronny Chieng: International Student
4.25 Above Average Presents
4.35 Just For Laughs Gags 14
5.00 Hood Adjacent With James Davis
5.50 The Jim Jefferies Show
6.15 The Daily Show 24
6.40 Your Face Or Mine 3
7.10 Amazingness
7.30 Billy On The Street 4
7.50 Most Ridiculous 2
8.40 The Goldbergs 5
9.30 Hot In Cleveland 6
10.20 Above Average Presents
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer 2
10.55 Above Average Presents
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 Above Average Presents
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
6.00 Taste Of Love
7.00 The Destiny Of White Snake
8.00 King Of Blaze
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 The Destiny Of White Snake
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 King Of Blaze
5.00 The Destiny Of White Snake
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 The Destiny Of White Snake
10.00 King Of Blaze
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

Oscar performance sparks talk of Lady Gaga, Bradley Cooper romance

LOS ANGELES • Was it a steamy show of affection – or just a heart-felt professional performance?

For many Lady Gaga fans, in love with the possibility of the singer pursuing a romance with her A Star Is Born co-star Bradley Cooper after she split up with her fiancé, their consensus was that there were definitely sparks between the two.

They swooned over their performance on Sunday of Oscar-nominated song *Shallow* – which won – even as his girlfriend, Irina Shayk, watched from her front-row seat at the ceremony.

But the supermodel, 33, who has a 23-month-old daughter with Cooper, 44, is not concerned that she would lose her man.

US Weekly cited a source as saying that “Irina knows that Bradley and Lady Gaga are artists”, explaining their intimate *Shallow* duet.

“It’s a non-issue for her. They were in character putting on an Oscar performance.”

To prove her point, Shayk stood

up to give Lady Gaga and Cooper a standing ovation after their performance, and hugged Lady Gaga, 32, when she returned to her seat.

But love-struck fans have been further encouraged by media reports of a pre-Oscars party, where Lady Gaga attended and shared courteous pleasantries with ex-fiance Christian Carino, 49, when he showed up.

She hung out with Cooper in a corner of the room all night, sources noted, acting as though they were a real-life couple.

Former Spice Girl Mel B is also not convinced that Shayk should stay calm over the matter.

“I felt so uncomfortable for Bradley’s girlfriend, oh my gosh,” she said on the Good Morning Britain show, commenting on what happened on Oscars’ night.

Noting that Lady Gaga and Cooper had “the look of love” on stage, she added: “I would like to think it was part of the whole performance... Hopefully, it’s only professional.”



The stars of A Star Is Born, Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper, performing the song, *Shallow*, at the Oscars. PHOTO: NYTIMES-

On social media



ARIANA'S GRAND INSTAGRAM FOLLOWING: Break Free singer Ariana Grande is now ahead of the chasing pack, after overtaking Selena Gomez as Instagram's most followed woman. As of yesterday, Grande, 25, had 146.3 million followers, while fellow pop star Gomez, 26, had 146.2 million. But both are not a match for footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, 34, who scores with 155.9 million followers. Grande, whose new album *Thank U, Next* sits atop the Billboard chart this week, made history recently when she became the first artist – since The Beatles in 1964 – to fill the top three spots on the singles chart. PHOTO: ARIANA GRANDE/ INSTAGRAM

Seinfeld's sports car a fake?

NEW YORK • It was not a laughing matter for comedian Jerry Seinfeld when he found out that a 1958 Porsche Carrera Speedster he had bought could be a fake.

He had paid US\$1.2 million (S\$1.6 million) for it in 2013 and is now suing a California dealer for damages.

The suit comes weeks after Seinfeld himself was sued by another company – over the car's authenticity. It had bought his car for US\$1.54 million in a 2016 auction, USA Today reported.

“Mr Seinfeld, who is a very successful comedian, does not need to supplement his income by building and selling counterfeit sports cars,” the lawsuit against the dealer said.

The lawsuit noted that he owned one of the world's largest collections of Porsche models.

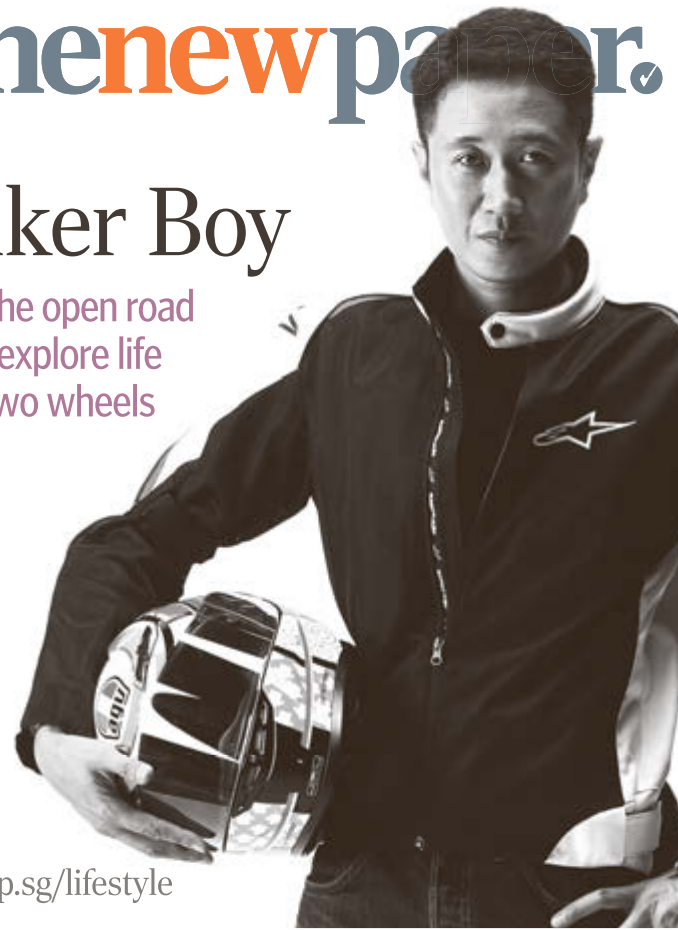
He had never done business with the California company before it approached his agent over a deal for the vintage vehicle.

The suit added that Seinfeld had put trust in the dealer's certificate of authenticity.

thenewpaper.

Biker Boy

Hit the open road and explore life on two wheels



tnp.sg/lifestyle

In short

Oscars without a host draws a bigger audience

The first Oscars broadcast without a host in 30 years attracted a 12 per cent bigger American television audience than last year's record-low viewership.

Singer R. Kelly out on bail

R&B singer R. Kelly walked out of jail on Monday after posting bail following three days in custody.

New claims prompt inquiry on Luc Besson

French prosecutors have dropped a probe on rape allegations against director Luc Besson, but launched a separate inquiry following new claims of sexual aggression.

Singer Rain awaits birth of second child

Actress Kim Tae-hee and singer Rain are awaiting the birth of their second child in September, said her management agency.

Netflix picks up Malaysian film

KUALA LUMPUR • Netflix has given the vote of approval to Malaysian movie *Rise Ini Kalilah*, picking up rights to screen it from yesterday.

Weaving in six stories, the plot tracks the build-up to last year's general election in Malaysia when the ruling coalition lost its long-held grip on power.

The movie, which was shot in Malaysia, Singapore and Britain, was screened in Malaysia and Singapore last year.

Producer Fred Chong, who tapped a multiracial cast, had said *Rise* was not a political film.

“The world wants to know how a small democracy like Malaysia managed to make a monumental political shift without violence and bloodshed. So I told this story from the lens of six normal citizens, to demonstrate that the power of change comes from unity and determination of its people, not the elected politicians,” he was quoted as saying by trade publication Variety.

தமிழ்மூலா



Tamil Nadu documentary wins Oscar award

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SINGAPORE’S FASTEST GROWING COMPANIES 2019



DESIGN: KIMMIE TAN PHOTO: ISTOCK

Ahead of the curve

Find out which companies are achieving record growth rates, and why

Brought to you by **BR METALS**
Precious Metal Recycling



Waste not, want not

Environmentally conscious young entrepreneur Frank Chen is building a recycling powerhouse with salvaged scraps

BY MICHELLE BONG

One man's trash is another's treasure. So it is with Mr Frank Chen, who left his corporate job at one of the world's largest multinational professional services companies to spend his days collecting spent auto parts instead.

Born Francis Chan, he took on the name Frank Chen because his Chinese colleagues cannot pronounce his birth name properly. He also got used to everyone addressing him as Mr Chen. So to blend into the Chinese industry, he took on his business name and built BR Metals as Frank Chen.

To this day, he will not hesitate to roll up his sleeves and rummage through scrapyards around the world in search of scrap materials laden with precious metals.

Mr Chen, who is in his mid-30s, is the managing director of BR Metals,

a market leader in the recycling of Platinum Group Metals (PGM) such as platinum, palladium and rhodium. This company, which has grown into a recycling powerhouse, tops the list of fastest growing companies.

WHERE IT BEGAN

BR Metals' inception began in 2009 when Mr Chen's foresight led him to see that there was a growing market demand for professionalism and transparency in the collection, processing and recycling of scrap materials.

He decided to collect and recycle waste materials that contain PGM such as spark plug, oxygen sensor, petrol-chemical catalyst, automotive electronic control units with a focus on catalytic converters found in gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles. Within a few

short years, the company has captured a significant market share in China. Today, it has offices in Singapore, Guangzhou, China, and Cambodia.

But striking the proverbial iron while it was hot has been just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to achieving success. Mr Chen developed a strategic plan to acquire new supplies and market share, set high industrial standards as a trusted partner and remained ISO 14001:2015 compliant.

Success, in part, has also been attributed to the formation of a strong network of trusted suppliers in South-east Asia, China, India, Sri Lanka and far-flung Iraq, Haiti and Iceland.

Says Mr Chen: "These relationships have been forged with trust through our insistence on transparency in all our business processes over the years. We pride ourselves on our integrity and fairness, fully recognising that long-term supplier relationships are critical to our success."

FORGING AHEAD

As a progressive company, being one step ahead of the others is a part of BR Metals' DNA.

Mr Chen says the company's technological edge over its competitors, which boosted its growth in the formative years, remains its driving force and continues to play an important role in helping it stand out from the rest.

"But the gap is closing; we are currently looking for our next set of unique selling points that will set us apart from the competition," he adds.

There are also plans to improve sampling processes and raise productivity. To take on increasing capacity and overcome labour crunch, the company automated its sampling line in Singapore last year. It reduced time required for each production cycle by 72.07 per cent and electricity usage by 48.26 per cent, and increases cost savings by 38.15 per cent.

With intensified competition from international players, Mr Chen has big plans for BR Metals in 2019 and beyond.

He shares: "Due to regulatory changes restricting gasoline and diesel vehicles in China, India and some European Union countries, we are sourcing for new markets and supplies in South-east Asia, South Asia and Mongolia, while diversifying our service offerings.

"We are also restructuring to be ready for the new market dynamics expected from the rise of Electric Vehicles (EV) as the gradual phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles will have detrimental effects on our business if we are not prepared.

"To increase our collection and recycling volume, we are opening a new representative office in Ho Chi Minh City and a bigger production facility in Shaoguan, Guangdong. The latter will provide us with the space capacity for cobalt recycling from EV batteries at a later stage."

Visit brmetalsltd.com for more information.



Mr Frank Chen
PHOTOS: BR METALS



Tech firms in the lead

A look at why IT-enabled firms, in particular, are dominating Singapore's Fastest Growing Companies list

BY AJ LEOW

Online statistics, market research and business intelligence portal Statista, in collaboration with The Straits Times, has drawn up a list of the fastest growing Singapore-based companies between 2014 and 2017.

Out of the 85 that made the cut, 18 were technology-related. Industry watchers say this is in line with how digital transformation will continue to change the global business landscape and upend the status quo for enterprises both big and small.

Much of the sea change, they add, stems from the significant advances in Cloud technology over the past decade.

Info on demand

In its simplest terms, Cloud technology refers to the storing and access of data and information via the Internet — instead of a computer hard drive or company server — to be retrieved on demand.

Mr Pierre Legrand, leader at PwC South East Asia Technology Consulting, says its advent has led to significant increase in IT capabilities in the areas of maintenance, scalability, reliability and security starting with the big infrastructure players such as Microsoft, Google and Amazon.

Mr Legrand explains: "These companies first built the capabilities for themselves, but soon realised that the same IT platforms could be offered to the broader market since few enterprises are able to match their level of investments in areas such as software, hardware, computing and data storage space."



PHOTO: ISTOCK

"Furthermore, they can be scaled up even further via tie-ups with multiple smaller partners to create whole new ecosystems. With Cloud, entry barriers become much lower for the second layer of players — fintech and other industry disruptors — who can now offer services they couldn't before."

The power of ecosystems

For their clients, this is good news: there is a lesser need to build or overhaul mega projects internally since the IT integration process has become more efficient from cost control and delivery perspectives.

Most appealingly, there are no longer issues with outdated legacy IT infrastructures and processes to deal with.

"What this means is not only are businesses able to shift resources away from low-value, repetitive and rote activities and re-direct their IT energies around customer and business outcomes, they can also work with external parties to co-create," says Mr Mohit Mehrotra, strategy consulting co-leader at Deloitte Asia Pacific.

This gives rise to dynamic, constantly evolving ecosystems that typically bring together diverse players of different sizes to collectively learn, adapt, innovate and scale up to serve markets in ways beyond the capacity of any single organisation or traditional industry, Mr Mehrotra adds.

Meanwhile, Mr Jonathan Rees, Asean digital leader at Ernst & Young Advisory, points out that the Cloud landscape has also enabled companies to embrace the power and knowledge of ecosystems never seen before.

Mr Rees says: "New collaboration platforms are allowing companies to unleash the potential of their entire employee and customer networks."

"We are also seeing businesses looking at non-traditional partnership models such as ride-sharing, banking and insurance to fuel

customer acquisition and the ability to cross sell to a common customer base."

Disruption: the new norm

And so, with IT structure costs reduced, the impact and fear of failure among companies is significantly lowered, allowing new players to disrupt the status quo and more established ones to experiment with new collaborative ways to deliver their services more effectively to the market.

Explains Mr Bidyut Dumra, head of innovation, technology and operations at Development Bank of Singapore (DBS): "We are no longer just competing with traditional peers, but new entrants to the industry."

"The accessibility of new technologies has levelled the playing field for start-ups and fintechs, now that the barrier to entry is significantly reduced. Big platform players with large customer bases, such as Alibaba, are also looking to financial services as an extension of the business."

"We started our digital transformation journey almost 10 years ago to bring in new technologies such as cloud computing, machine learning and data analytics to build new customer-centric products and services."

With the launch of its application programming interface platform in 2017, DBS can now work with other brands, corporates, fintechs and software developers to accelerate its digital roadmap.

"We also launched Startup Xchange last year to harness the power of emerging technologies by co-opting start-ups that to customise innovative solutions for our customers and employees. We have since rolled out 10 emerging technology solutions to solve business pain-points for internal teams and the bank's small and medium-sized enterprise clients," says Mr Dumra.

What lies ahead

Mr Legrand anticipates the mushrooming of more customer-centric

We can expect more predictive capabilities that will see prices set according to end-users' behaviour and usage patterns. There will be less of a cookie-cutter approach, like how car insurance is charged depending on your daily travel. Artificial intelligence and machine learning will eventually replace manual and process-driven functions in the workplace.

MR PIERRE LEGRAND

Leader
PwC South East Asia Technology Consulting

and employee-centric services, along with business-to-business (B2B) engagement in the evolving business-IT landscape.

"We can expect more predictive capabilities that will see prices set according to end-users' behaviour and usage patterns. There will be less of a cookie-cutter approach, like how car insurance is charged depending on your daily travel. Artificial intelligence and machine learning will eventually replace manual and process-driven functions in the workplace," says Mr Legrand, who adds that there will be less dependence on devices such as keyboards and computer mice with a shift towards more voice-activated functions.

Meanwhile, Mr Ken Pereira, chief executive officer of security firm Oneberry Technologies, expects an increasing use of robotics and automation in countries including Singapore — where the workforce is ageing — to reduce the reliance on manpower.

"We already have client requests for facial recognition to authenticate identities or access control, and we are working on rolling out these solutions with our partners," he says.

sweetspot

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PHOTOS: MUNDIPHARMA

Mundipharma's chief executive officer Raman Singh (right) on breaking new ground this year and beyond

Making a difference every day

BY MICHELLE BONG

ON MEASURING GROWTH AND SUCCESS

"As one of Singapore's fastest growing companies, we believe growth and success are intertwined because success for us means reaching and helping as many patients as possible, and growth enables us to achieve this. Continuously extending our geographical footprint, expanding our portfolio of medicines, hiring more people and performing financially makes achieving these other growth metrics possible."

ON HOW TECHNOLOGY WILL BE A KEY BUSINESS DRIVER

"Technology will play a huge role in the way people's health is being managed. Because there are technological capabilities we don't have as an industry, we need agility to collaborate with partners to shape the future of healthcare. My vision is to

change Mundipharma from a pharmaceutical company leveraging digital capabilities to a digital company selling medicines.

This is an ongoing process, there is no timeline to it because the pharmaceutical industry is based on innovation. Our core business is going to be innovating medicines and drugs; this is where digital technology will help us, by ensuring that we innovate faster, and reach greater numbers of people in a shorter time.

"The evolution of technology has been the catalyst for massive ongoing transformation at Mundipharma because we believe it is essential we evolve in parallel to fully harness its potential to improve quality of life for people. In 2019, we will continue to transform and roll out innovative digital initiatives that will have a significant impact and further cement our position as a pioneer in this critical area."

ON THE PHARMACEUTICALS INDUSTRY

"I am very fortunate to work in pharmaceuticals, which changes people's lives — not just those who get treated, but the friends and family around them. I think it gives such meaning to come to work each day — there is a huge emotional incentive to do so. What really excites me is the opportunity to innovate and improve lives, advancing the human race."

ON HIS LOVE FOR THE JOB

"Our organisation tries to improve access to healthcare across the world. I think I have been an enabler, working with doctors, physicians and patients. It's all about communication, digital expertise and business acumen. That's what it takes to run an organisation as big as Mundipharma."

ON MUNDIPHARMA'S MOST VALUABLE PARTNERS

"Governments, regulators, healthcare providers, patients and peers within the same industry. Ultimately we have a shared purpose and responsibility to provide quality healthcare and it is essential that we collaborate effectively to deliver this."

We are partnering with companies in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Singapore. Currently, we are working with a company called Biofourmis Singapore to develop an automated pain scale for complex chronic disease management. We also collaborate with other companies in the areas of ophthalmology, respiratory and specialty care."

Visit mundipharma.com.sg for more information.

In collaboration with



BY MICHELLE BONG

Managing finances and maintaining fluid cashflow is a challenge for many Singaporeans. In Singapore, there is a community of people faced with limited credit access.

In cases where such help is needed, premier licensed microfinance company, Crawfort, offers a viable financial solution. Founded by brothers Jjohn and James Cheow, the company is leading the way when it comes to upping the ante on traditional models of moneylending, and bringing it into a new era of technology-enabled consumer finance.

Says Mr Jjohn Cheow, its co-founder and chief investment officer: "Our experience as entrepreneurs has made us realise how hard it is to access

capital when you need it the most. Because of this, we identify and empathise with others like us, and want to help individuals, and small and medium enterprises, who need access to credit facilities."

STARTING A REVOLUTION

Since Crawfort was founded in 2011, the firm has sought to drive innovation and leverage on the emergence of smart digital processes. With these capabilities in force, the company was able to hit a new high in the streamlining of internal processes and optimising resources to achieve greater efficiency and productivity.

Today, Crawfort has become a trusted brand offering a suite of loans ranging from personal, business to bridging, for a wide range of customers. The company has seen an uptick in returning customers — an indication of its quality of service and appeal of

its comprehensive range of products. Serving as further testimony of its excellent customer service standards and delivery, Crawfort has achieved 98 per cent customer satisfaction reviews.

Says Mr James Cheow, co-founder and chief executive officer: "At Crawfort, customers are our primary focus. Sincerity, respect and empathy are at the heart of our corporate culture and we believe excellent customer service is a direct reflection of these values."

We build trust through the way we approach customer service, and we place a huge emphasis on building a partnership with our customers. We treat every customer with utmost respect, and we like to make them feel at home. Over time, because of this, we have come to gain their trust and confidence."



Mr Jjohn Cheow



Mr James Cheow

Innovative business Crawfort is rewriting the rules when it comes to moneylending solutions

TRAILBLAZING THE WAY

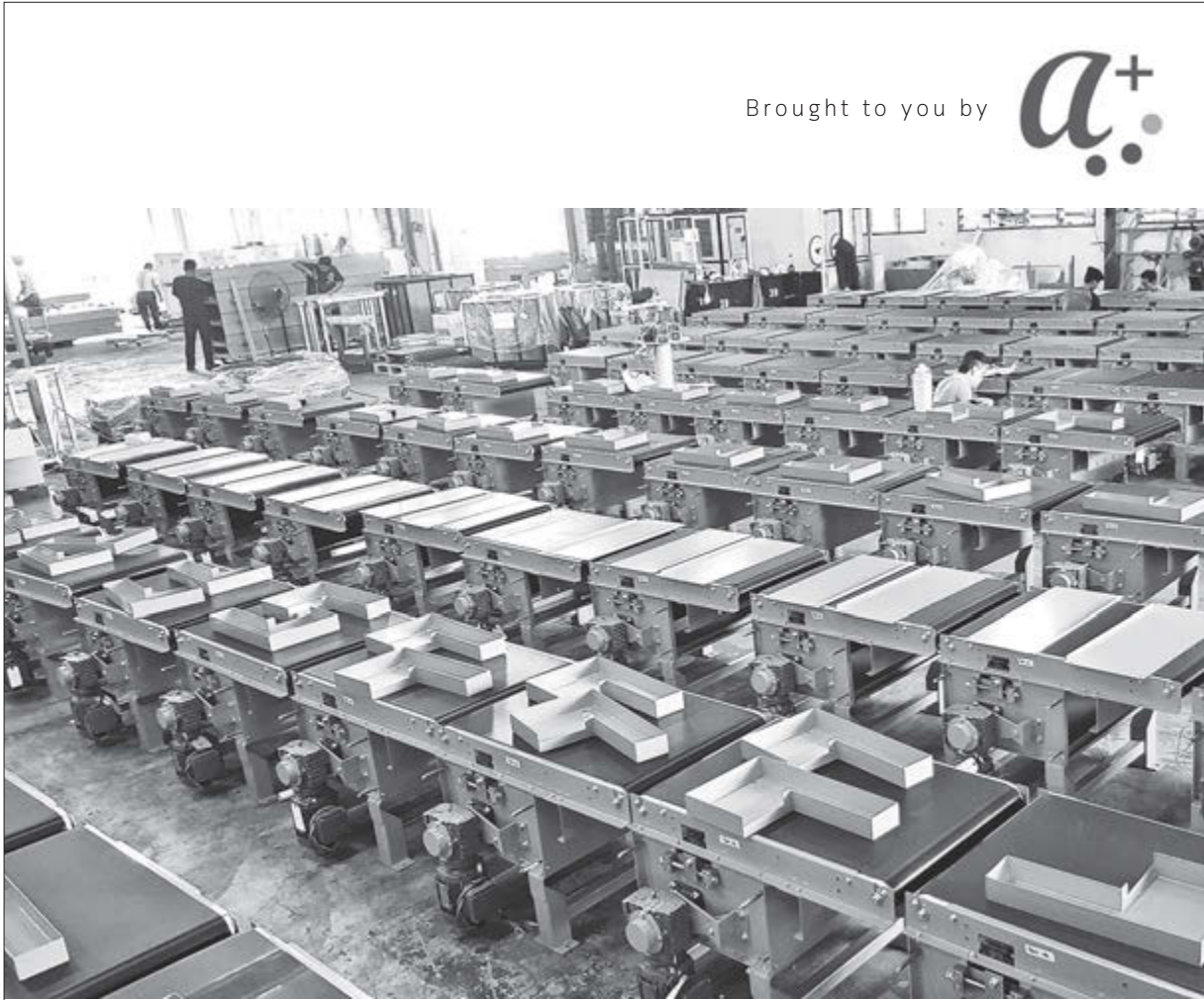
In spite of the government's implementation of new money-lending curbs — which has largely shrunk the industry in terms of providers — Crawfort has stayed aligned with these changes and has witnessed accelerated growth. Through innovation and its overall approach to conducting business, it has looked to differentiate itself from the rest of the pack and is continually changing perceptions around moneylending.

First, Crawfort offers best-in-class customer service and hospitality. It conducts transactions in a comfortable and welcoming environment, and provides consistent service delivery through quality customer care. Its onboarding and approval processes also provide customers with a simple and seamless experience in applying for access to credit facilities.

Second, it appeals to a new breed of customers who are seeking an intuitive and impeccable user experience. Crawfort has employed the use of innovative solutions to process its loan applications using proprietary algorithmic formulas in its predictive scoring credit methodologies. Its approval process is fast and delivers responsible lending, without compromising on compliance and face-to-face customer screening.

Adds Mr Jjohn Cheow: "We've always sought to be a pioneer in the industry in many respects. For instance, we were the first moneylending business to use AFS and SAM machines and post offices for repayment transactions. Thanks to our adoption of the best of today's technology, we have optimised internal processes, and this has translated to happy customers."

PHOTOS: CRAWFORT



PHOTOS: A-PLUS AUTOMATION, ISTOCK

Making the grade

BY JO-ANN HUANG

Not many companies live up to their monikers, but materials management service provider A-Plus Automation certainly does.

The company designs, manufactures and commissions material handling and sortation systems for its partners. For the past seven years, this small and medium-sized enterprise has scored top marks from its fast-growing logistics and e-commerce industry partners for providing affordable automation systems.

It has achieved this by leveraging four decades of industry experience and translating them into unique solutions for materials-handling. This feat would be impossible without its Malaysia-based operations team, which handles the demand for service support across South-east Asia.



A-Plus Automation continues to provide cutting-edge parcel sortation systems for e-commerce platforms

for our overseas customers," he says. Mr Ham adds that as the Singapore economy went from being labour-intensive in the early 1970s and 1980s to becoming highly automated, the company had to move up the value chain by partnering with overseas companies to assist them in expanding in Asia.

Given that the backbone of the e-commerce business is to sort orders and deliver the goods to the receiver's door step in the shortest time without error, A-Plus' sortation systems — which can sort 6,000 to 12,000 parcels of various sizes and weight per hour — have become an important part of e-commerce's order fulfilment.

MODEST BEGINNINGS

The business, which started in 1979, has stayed relevant in the automation industry today by shifting its focus from trading motors, sensors and components to excel in the field of automated materials handling systems.

Its client pool includes well-known local logistics, express parcel handling, courier and warehousing and foods production companies such as ExxonMobile Singapore, DHL Express Singapore and Tee Yih Jia, as well as overseas companies from Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, India, Dubai and China.

Its founding director Rodney Ham (above) says A-Plus' commitment to excellence is founded on providing customer focus, the right solutions and strong after-sales support.

"We aim to provide efficient and cost-effective sortation systems to our customers — it is one aspect of our business we value greatly. We design solutions specific to our customers' needs, all while providing quick post-sales assistance through local support centres

PLANS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

The company's new growth sector focus is on food and e-commerce.

Explains Mr Ham: "Seeing how selling and buying on the Internet is catching on with consumers here, A-Plus started developing solutions and perusing the growing e-commerce industries in 2014. It was the right choice — our e-commerce projects multiplied a year later.

"E-commerce is a growing trend and our challenge is to be on our toes, keeping abreast of technology and developing new capabilities to further refine and improve equipment performance."

More importantly, Mr Ham hopes that A-Plus will continue to be a top-of-mind market player for years to come.

"A-Plus has grown rapidly over the years and I am extremely happy that we are performing beyond my expectations. I look forward to bringing A-Plus to a new heights of designing and building innovative sortation systems throughout Asia," he says.

Visit www.aplus-am.com for more information.



Class of 2019

These 85 companies have made the cut to be the fastest growing in Singapore, achieving a high percentage increase in revenue between 2014 and 2017

RANKING	COMPANY	INDUSTRY	ABSOLUTE GROWTH RATE:
1	BR Metals Ltd	Waste management & Recycling	4,285%
2	Nuffield Dental Holdings Pte Ltd	Health	2,258%
3	V-Key Solutions Pte Ltd	Cybersecurity	1,477%
4	The Aureus Group	Education	1,368%
5	Grain	Food & Beverage	1,115%
6	Triple Retail Pte Ltd	Retail	1,094%
7	OneCare Holdings Pte Ltd	Health	871%
8	Catapult Ventures Pte Ltd	Fintech	730%
9	KC Group of Companies	Beauty	670%
10	A Yong Pte Ltd	Wholesale	664%
11	Knowesis Pte Ltd	Technology	632%
12	HNK Alpha Pte Ltd	Proprietary Training	604%
13	Aggregate Asset Management Pte Ltd	Financial services	553%
14	Zion Global Marketing Pte Ltd	Sales & Marketing	548%
15	Rewind Networks Pte Ltd	Media	518%
16	CashShield Pte Ltd	Technology	500%
17	Geo Energy Resources Ltd	Mining	496%
18	A-Plus Automation (S) Pte Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	488%
19	Oneberry Technologies Pte Ltd	Technology	455%
20	Transcend Solutions Pte Ltd	Technology	423%
21	Toffs Technologies Pte Ltd	Cybersecurity	420%
22	Niometrics Pte Ltd	Technology	400%
23	Security & Risk Solutions Pte Ltd	Support services	372%
24	PHP Engineering Pte Ltd	Construction	354%
25	Decision Science Agency Pte Ltd	Technology	348%
26	Energy Wave Worldwide Pte Ltd	Ecommerce	343%
27	Unison Consulting Pte Ltd	Financial services	329%
28	KSE Marine Works Pte Ltd	Construction	324%
29	SkyMap Global Pte Ltd	Aerospace & Defence	322%
30	Adept Health Pte Ltd	Health	319%
31	Neferti Pte Ltd	Beauty	318%
32	SaturdayClub Pte Ltd	Fashion	311%
33	Iron Chef Cuisine Pte Ltd	Food & Beverage	288%
34	Brandstory Inc (International) Pte Ltd	Advertising & Public Relations	246%
35	Taknet Systems Pte Ltd	Technology	209%
36	Webnatics Pte Ltd	Media	183%
37	Goodland Group Ltd	Property	176%
38	Wavecell Pte Ltd	Technology	160%
39	FoodLine.sg	Ecommerce	156%
40	Blimage Consulting Pte Ltd	Support services	155%
41	Lunch Actually Singapore	Ecommerce	146%
42	Y Ventures Group	Ecommerce	129%
43	Mundipharma Singapore	Pharmaceuticals	125%
44	Swee Hong Ltd	Construction	122%
45	SP Sysnet Pte Ltd	Technology	117%
46	Tetherfi Pte Ltd	Technology	115%
47	MindChamps Singapore Pte Ltd	Education	111%
48	Actspand Pte Ltd	Food & Beverage	108%
49	MLION Corp	Construction	105%
50	PropNex Realty Pte Ltd	Property	104%
51	Sanli Environmental Ltd	Waste management & Recycling	102%
52	Eastern Ghats International Pte Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	87%
53	Crawfort Pte Ltd	Financial services	87%
54	Winspire Solutions Pte Ltd	Technology	77%
55	Venture Corporation Ltd	Technology	62%
56	Agrocorp International Pte Ltd	Agricultural commodities	61%
57	Giantech Engineering Pte Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	59%
58	Excelexport Technology Ltd	Technology	57%
59	Singapore Kitchen Equipment Pte Ltd	Interiors	55%
60	Accordia Golf Trust Pte Ltd	Travel & Leisure	53%
61	PCI Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	52%
62	Talariaix Pte Ltd	Technology	52%
63	Info-Tech Systems Integrators Pte Ltd	Technology	51%
64	Hi-P International Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	50%
65	UMS Holdings Pte Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	48%
66	Spindex Industries Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	44%
67	Haw Par Corporation Ltd	Health	44%
68	Multi-Chem Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	43%
69	ESCO Pte Ltd	Technology	40%
70	Acma Engineers Pte Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	40%
71	Vertical Green Pte Ltd	Construction	36%
72	Health Management International Ltd	Health	35%
73	Olam International Ltd	Agricultural commodities	35%
74	GIB Automation Pte Ltd	Construction	34%
75	Jackspeed Corporation Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	31%
76	Whyze Solutions Pte Ltd	Technology	30%
77	Compact Metal Industries Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	30%
78	Chasen Holdings Ltd	Support services	29%
79	IFAST Corporation Ltd	Financial services	29%
80	JUMBO Group Pte Ltd	Restaurants	29%
81	The Kimly Group	Restaurants	29%
82	Fort Digital Pte Ltd	Telecommunications	28%
83	Raffles Medical Group	Health	27%
84	ISDN Holdings Ltd	Manufacturing & Machinery	27%
85	DTC World Corporation Pte Ltd	Sales & Marketing	26%

Brought to you by **ONEBERRY**
Innovative Solutions

Oneberry Technologies
is making moves within the security
industry — one robot at a time

Taking security automation to the next level

The 24-hour Oneberry Operations Centre was established in 2010 to facilitate Oneberry's efforts to be the first mover of remote monitoring in Singapore. PHOTOS: ONEBERRY TECHNOLOGIES

BY MICHELLE BONG

You could say Mr Ken Pereira (below) is a visionary. His career in the security industry began when he joined a traditional security firm in 2003. He quickly realised there were numerous industry challenges to face head-on.

He explains: "The role of a security officer is to observe, record and report on activity over 12-hour shifts and six-day work weeks. It is no surprise that the security officers were tired from the long working hours. "Their manual duties included logging observations, incident reporting, and recording visitor information into notebooks. They were also expected to perform physical patrols or be stationed at static posts, sometimes in remote areas with no facilities. Such inefficiencies also led to miscommunication between the officers, security agencies who hired them, and the security buyers."

For a better overview of the industry and its challenges, Mr Pereira worked as a security officer to investigate the problems first-hand. His takeaway? He had to improve the way things were done.

That is how award-winning innovative security and surveillance solutions provider Oneberry Technologies was born — and as Mr Pereira explains, "berry" is the cure for the industry, with our concept of man and machine.

MAKING ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

To date, the 200-plus-strong company with Mr Pereira as its chief executive officer has designed several solutions for the industry.

It designed and deployed Oneberry MobiCams — a rapid mobile surveillance solution enabled with intelligent cameras and powered by fuel cell technology that could run off-grid reliably and autonomously.

During the Trump-Kim Summit last June, these were set up at various sites together with several command centres for the police to provide behind-the-scenes support.

Says Mr Pereira: "While technology is pivotal, judgement and decision-making remain human-centric. Technology should complement the functions of man, and improve and enhance the level of security and operations. While reducing manpower costs, our solutions ensure that security is not compromised, while elevating the role of a security officer."

To facilitate this, Oneberry has introduced the Virtual Guard System, an integrated platform of intelligent cameras with video analytics to reduce manpower reliance on physical surveillance or patrolling tasks.

It monitors premises remotely with less reliance on on-site security guards. By using analytics from intelligent cameras, sites are monitored virtually from a command centre, and security breaches trigger alerts to operators. A patrol team is then dispatched to investigate the matter.

Taking things one step further, the tandem implementation of other automated processes such as access control, incident reporting and clocking allow for significantly reduced manpower on site.

Such productivity improvements not only put Oneberry on the map as a reliable specialist technology and service provider, but enable its clients in the public, commercial and residential sectors to enjoy at least 30 per cent productivity and manpower savings.

EYE ON THE FUTURE

With the new guidelines proposed by the Security Tripartite Cluster (STC), a rise in security costs and heightened threats, Mr Pereira foresees challenges ahead.

He shares: "All licensed security agencies are required to pay their officers according to the progressive

wage model ladder. This has been a long time coming for the security workforce, but will translate to an increase in costs to security buyers.

"And from 2021, with the removal of overtime exemption, security agencies will be driven to review their operations and make more efficient use of the manpower, with an already existing shortage of manpower. These new guidelines for security agencies will push security buyers to look into wallet-friendly solutions."

To mitigate these problems, Mr Pereira aims to continue offering productivity security solutions to help businesses reduce costs while enhancing the level of security.

This will involve constantly innovating as well as looking into launching new technology to raise industry productivity.

The company is also aiming to launch its own security robots to further enhance and complement the man and machine concept. This is slated to happen at the Interpol World 2019 event to be held in Singapore this July.

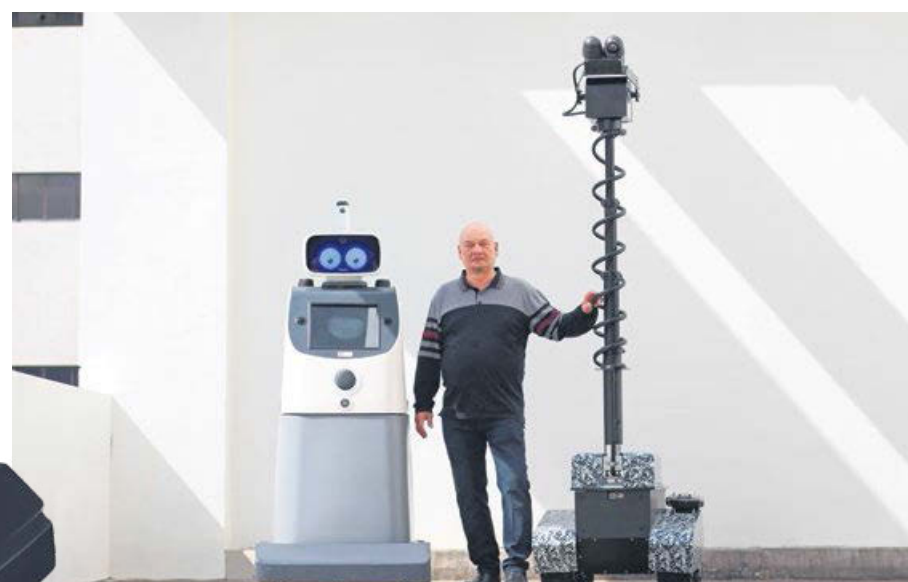
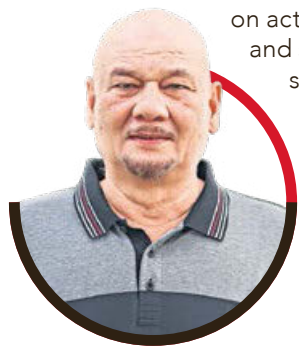
The fuel cell-powered Oneberry RoboGuard is the first customisable security surveillance and inspection robot designed to support ad-hoc security, especially for events.

Says Mr Pereira: "They not only perform surveillance functions, but act as a deterrent on-site. They can also bring multi-functional value to our clients by providing concierge or marketing services. Oneberry is constantly innovating so we can remain on the forefront of providing cutting-edge technology solutions to our clients, with the value proposition to help our clients save costs."

The company has received interest from and is looking to venture overseas, which will help continue its journey as one of Singapore's fastest-growing companies.

Security buyers looking to explore manpower saving technology are invited to the Oneberry Innovation Centre to experience the company's offering first-hand.

Visit oneberry.com for more information.



Oneberry CEO Ken Pereira with the Oneberry RoboGuards, which can be customised to automate tasks and raise productivity.

Collaborating with valued partners

**SFC
ENERGY**



A group of trusted partners are instrumental to Oneberry's success.

These include SFC Energy, for its reliable, off-grid energy solutions that comprise innovative direct methanol fuel cell technology to provide reliable and autonomous power for long durations with no downtime — the perfect power supply for multiple applications and industrial use cases.

MOBOTIX
Beyond Human Vision



Oneberry also works with one of the world's leading video camera technology manufacturers, Mobotix, to solve real-world challenges in security via its multifunctional IP video systems used in security surveillance deployments.

CKMT

Meanwhile, professional engineering consultancy CKMT International has supported Oneberry's civil, structural, mechanical and electrical designs to the highest safety standards.

SINGAPORE'S FASTEST GROWING COMPANIES 2019

sweetspot
Partner Content


Best foot forward

Find out how the leaders behind some of today's fastest-growing companies in Singapore view leadership, talent, business growth and being future-ready

On talent as a precious resource



We are not a young, hip company like Google, but we offer permanent flexibility. Everyone is mobile; if they have paperwork to do, then they come in. Otherwise, we can work from anywhere, anytime. The mood and attitude always seem to be positive and I believe that if employees are happy, then in turn your clients will be too.

The first Friday of the month is Netflix Friday. We gather in our meeting room where employees can turn on Netflix and watch whatever they want — from horror to K-drama — and help themselves to the beer in the fridge and the snacks.

— MR WENG CHAM SAM,
Transcend Solutions



It's paramount that our employees understand that customer service is the highest priority. We share best practices that help to keep us at the forefront of customer service delivery. We provide a best-in-class workplace environment and operational systems to give our staff a professional and empowered mindset from the get-go.

— JOHN CHEOW,
Crawford



It begins with hiring excellent, highly motivated people and then empowering them to think outside the square, make decisions and not be afraid to fail. Knowing that they are helping to make a positive difference in millions of people's lives every day is a powerful motivator, which ignites passion and pride that we stoke at every opportunity. Combining that with enabling people to think and act on their feet, we have a brilliant workforce to drive our business.

— MR RAMAN SINGH,
Mundipharma Singapore

On growth, expansion or success



PHOTOS: ISTOCK



For now, we do not foresee ourselves going beyond Asia as we still want to build a strong foundation as the number one dredging contractor here.

— MR SEAN KIM,
KSE Marine Works



Growth is measured by a number... there's nothing ambiguous about it. Success, on the hand, is a little tougher because it's very subjective. Success means more than growth and a healthy profit margin; it's also about making our mark as an environmental champion. Towards this end, we're exploring collaborative opportunities with a few local organisations.

— MR FRANK CHEN,
BR Metals

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Brought to you by
TRANSCEND
SOLUTIONS
SECURE & SIMPLY YOUR IT

BY MEREDITH WOO

Flexibility, value and hard work are central to the growth of any small business. Transcend Solutions' director, Weng Cham Sam adds another core value to the list: a genuine commitment to problem solving.

"It is not just about selling, but being true partners, and helping our clients be profitable and more productive. Our customised IT solutions help our clients grow, and save them time and money," says Mr Sam.

The way Transcend Solutions goes about its role as an information technology solutions provider makes it a favourite among its multi-national customer base, which includes companies in the financial services, security and insurance, banking, manufacturing, retail and logistics sectors. It specialises in building computer architectures using the secure IBM Power Systems-based Advanced Interactive eExecutive (AIX) operating system, favoured by firms that work in real-time environments around the world. It also offers services such as database management, middleware implementation, security solutions and business continuity planning.

The company's specialist know-how enabled it to cross the million-dollar mark in its first year of operations in 2014. But it is the close-knit firm's attitude to business that has helped it continue to deliver outstanding annual growth.

According to Statista, the business saw primarily organic revenue growth of 423 per cent between 2014 and 2017.

In five years, staff strength has tripled. In June last year, the company was named an IBM platinum partner. It currently runs a satellite office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and has plans to expand into Indonesia.

Mr Sam attributes revenue growth to a long-term approach: supporting clients and making its service offerings both complete and affordable. This has helped it secure and retain many of its multi-national and enterprise clients.

Transcend Solutions is also a niche business; few companies in Singapore offer AIX-based IT infrastructure solutions, database management and middleware implementations with security as a top priority.

The shared history of the current leadership team is also a big plus — Mr Sam had previously worked with many of them for over a decade, and counts them among his friends. Each member of the team oversees different aspects of the business.

"We can talk about anything under the sun; there has never been a rift among us," he says.

Together, they are determined to see the business succeed. As Mr Sam says: "This has been our 'baby', and we continue to find ways to ensure it reaches new growth milestones."

He highlights other factors that drive the success of Transcend Solutions.

#1 ACCOUNTABILITY

"If you see that your clients are successful, you feel happy because you helped them implement something. For us, our work is not done even though we have inked a deal. Every now and then, we still check in with our clients to ask if there is anything we can do to support them further. Our clients' progress is our report card."

#2 CAMARADERIE

"One person cannot work alone, but if we all put our minds together, that is when things are strong. If we see that a team member needs help, we offer it before he even asks. There is no such thing as 'this is not part of my job scope'. For instance, although I'm not a technical guy, I will go to the data centre to help engineers physically with mounting servers, cabling and such."

"Whenever there is a project, everyone pitches in. Even if we cannot be of help, we will suggest meeting up for coffee after the day's work is done, or offer moral support."

#3 OPEN COMMUNICATION

"There isn't really a boss-employee relationship; we have a flat hierarchy. How do we integrate newbies into the team? With open arms, and literally no doors. We are all like friends — open to both positive or negative feedback, and of course, ideas.

"With clients, we are also upfront in terms of our capabilities and overall solution offerings. We manage the whole project from end to end."

Visit www.transcend.com.sg for more information.



Top: Mr Weng Cham Sam, director at Transcend Solutions.



Above: Open communication is key to keeping the team tight.
PHOTOS: AILEEN TED, TRANSCEND SOLUTIONS, ISTOCK

Brought to you by
tetherfi

Customer experience digital transformation journeys simplified

Need support for everyday tasks such as making fund transfers, getting a doctor's appointment or booking hotel rooms? The days of long minutes on hold and questions that don't make sense are numbered, thanks to Tetherfi

BY LUKE TAN

Picture this: You need support on activating your new credit card. You pick up the phone, dial the service provider's 1-800 number, and enter your personal details before being led down a dreaded maze of menus and options.

All this while, your phone is cradled to your ear, as you attempt to multitask and get on with work.

Sounds familiar? This frustrating everyday experience is on its way out.

KEEPING IT LOCAL

When users and consumers need help or support with a product or service, they often turn to a traditional "call centre", where an IVR (interactive voice response) system with its familiar "For option A, press one" is supplemented by human customer-service agents.

However, many of these voice-centric call centres tend to be located in foreign countries, which lower costs but creates added complexity. Now, a Singapore-based company is tapping into the power of digital technologies to make things easier.

"We foresee that many companies will want to continue to maintain or even bring back

their support operations in-shore leveraging the power of digital as a means of reducing overheads while providing a broader choice of channels for customers to connect with their service providers" explains Jayesh Pajwani, co-founder and chief growth officer at Tetherfi.

BEYOND VOICE

"When it comes to support, voice phone calls are far from the only option these days," says Mr Vineeth Nayak, founder and managing director, and a 20-year veteran of the call-centre industry.

The company boasts extensive experience in options, or channels, that service providers can make available to their customers in addition to voice. These include email, SMS, real-time web chat both on websites and in apps, and even third-party chat apps such as LINE and Viber, social media and fax.

Its web-based Tetherfi Multi-Media Agent Client (TMAC) acts as a Unified Agent Workspace for agents to handle all newer digital channels as well as traditional voice channel. Says Mr Nayak: "The deployment of TMAC has played a pivotal role in realisation of digital and omni-channel customer experience transformation for our clients."

In Asia, the likes of United Overseas Bank, Development Bank of Singapore, Marina Bay Sands and Singapore Press Holdings have

chosen Tetherfi to help them realise digital transformation in customer service.

BREAKING LIMITATIONS

Mr Nayak adds that beyond omni-channel transformation, Tetherfi's strength lies in being the only vendor in Asia who can deliver a digital-only or digital-first contact centre with any combination of these digital channels, while its competitors are still focused on voice-centric strategies.

At the core of this is an Interaction Workflow Engine (IWE), a web-based software module that allows companies to modify how their customers are directed during voice and text-based interactions, without making changes to the contact centre's software.

Says Mr Pajwani: "Anything you can do by self-service voice, you can do on other non-voice channels using our multi-channel virtual assist platform."

With such innovations as voice and text based interaction steering — the ability to say or type what you are looking for, and be directed immediately to the correct help area — IWE can reduce tedious waiting spent listening for options, along with the need for intervention by human customer service agents.

Beyond this, Tetherfi is looking on machine learning as the future. This strategy is playing out now on the company's Omni-Channel Management (OCM) software platform, a complete suite of customer support products that works across multiple channels. It is able to suggest answers for human agents to respond with, and even offers scores to help them choose the most appropriate answer.

Adds Mr Nayak: "Over time, the software will 'learn' the best answer for every situation, giving us the potential to develop a future multi-channel virtual assistant which will respond to customer queries without any human intervention."

WIN-WIN SITUATION

Above all, companies from banking and insurance to healthcare, telecommunications and transport stand to gain by getting on board with Tetherfi's innovative services.

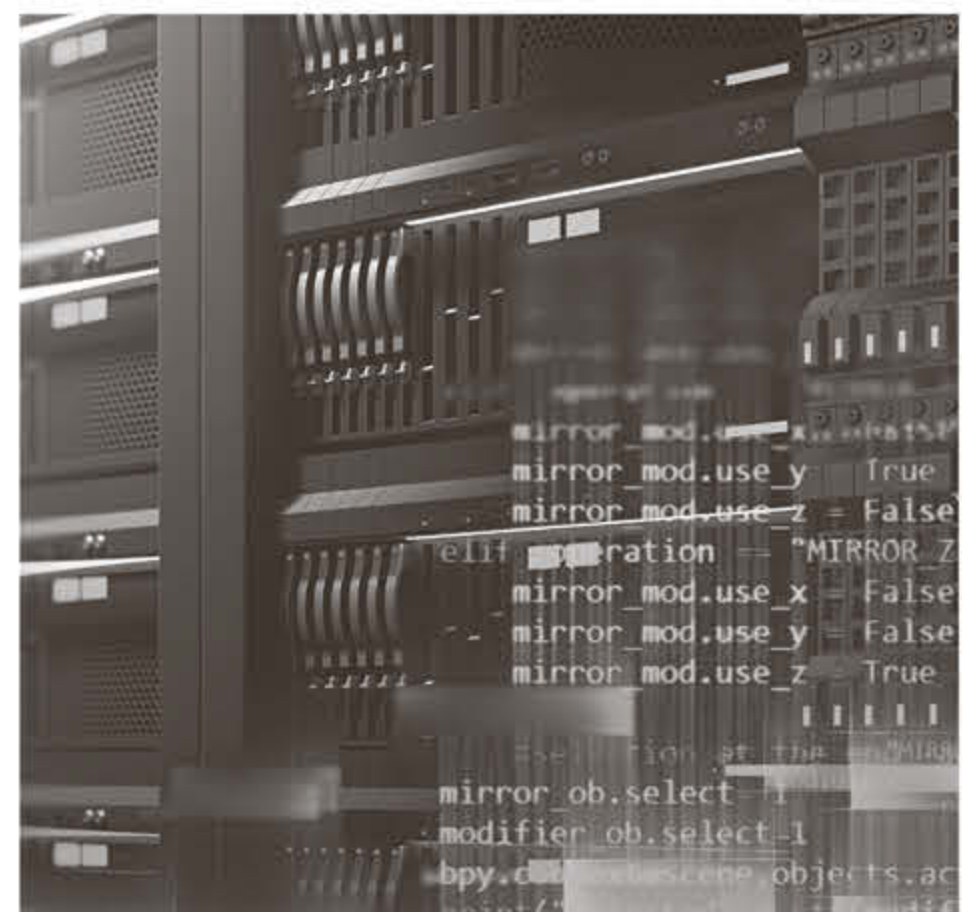
"The simplified architecture of our products reduces companies' capital expenditure, making it quicker for them to roll out a contact centre which allows their customers to reach them on various channels, and runs on tried-and-tested platforms which cost less time and money to run and maintain."

"It's time for new advancements in call-centre services," adds Mr Nayak. "I'm passionate about our products, and believe we have the potential to be a winner in this area."

Visit tetherfi.com for more information.

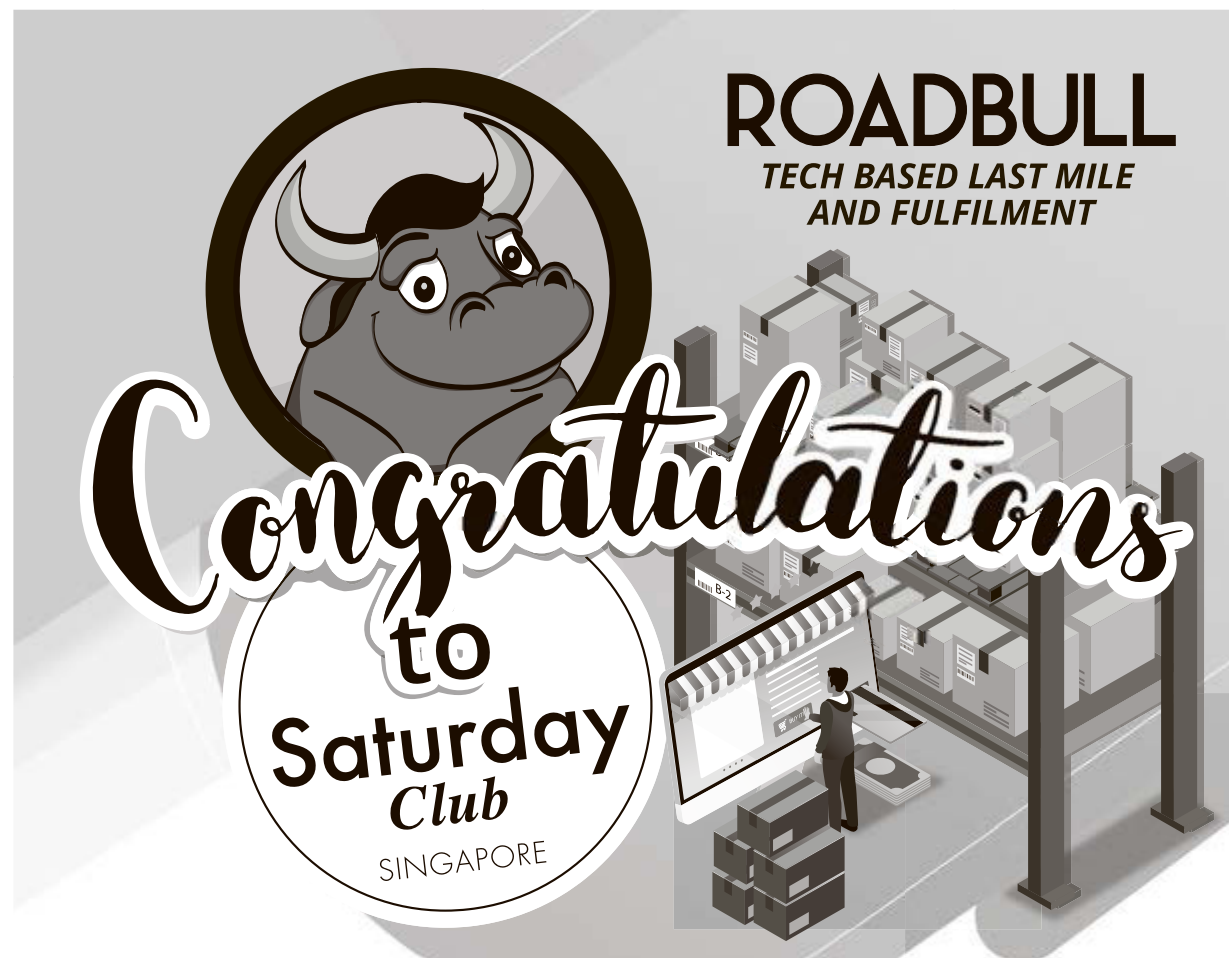


Mr Vineeth Nayak (top), founder and managing director and Mr Jayesh Pajwani (above), chief growth officer at Tetherfi.
PHOTOS: TETHERFI, ISTOCK



No barriers to growth

The success of Transcend Solutions is driven by accountability, camaraderie and open communication



as a top Growth Champion in **The Straits Times - Statista 2019 ranking of Singapore's Fastest Growing Companies.**



GEMS is a comprehensive and dynamic omni-channel fulfilment solution. Enables order aggregation, monitors inventory as well as analyse and improve fulfilment capabilities with real time data.

Benefits of GEMS

- Save time with everything done in a few clicks
- Single dashboard to view all orders from multiple marketplaces
- Customized Reports to track sales and inventory movement from sales channels
- Real time visibility on delivery & inventory levels giving you complete control



For more information
SCAN HERE



Order Fulfilment
Orders received before cutoff time will be shipped the next day, guaranteed.



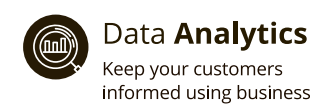
Quality Checks
All our processes are covered by a working procedure/work instruction document and are subject to regular quality checks.



Returns Management
We simplify the return process for retailers, ensuring stringent quality checks before restocking.



Last Mile Delivery
Ship to customers locally with our last mile services.



Data Analytics
Keep your customers informed using business reports and access detailed activity history logs for analysis.



Inventory Management
Track order information, resolve inventory issues and improve customer support through real time dashboards and insightful reporting.



Visit us at gems.roadbull.com

Powered by Roadbull

GEMS | Global E-commerce Multi-Channel System

SINGAPORE'S FASTEST GROWING COMPANIES 2019

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Best foot forward



We thrive on our strong engineering team to design and implement creative solutions, effective production facilities located just two hours away in Malaysia, and a strong partnership supply chain programme for raw materials and services to fulfil our orders. We have also established a good network across the South-East Asian region to render installation and after sales services support, maintaining a high level of equipment availability with few downtimes.

— MR RODNEY HAM,
A-Plus Automation Singapore

There are quite a few international and local brands that we see as friends of the industry. Together we are disrupting the traditional approach to retailing.

— MR YING TZE HER,
SaturdayClub

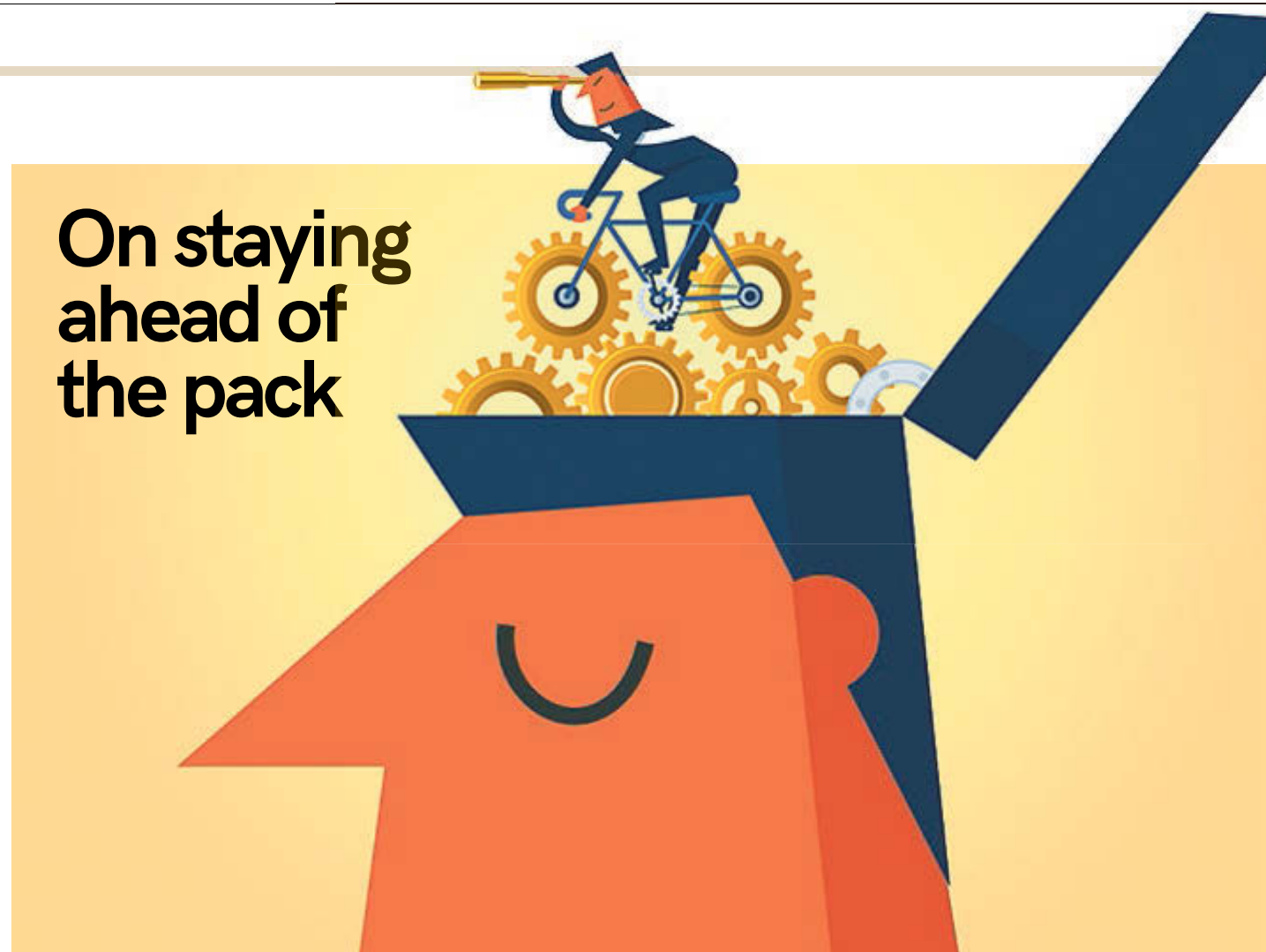


PHOTO: ISTOCK



Continuous innovation is the heart of the company and lies in everything we do. We were the first adopters of fuel cell technology in 2010 in Singapore to provide off-grid power. Back then, no one had even heard of it! We also take lots of risks; we have made mistakes along the way, but we learn from them and do better.

— MR KEN PEREIRA,
Oneberry Technologies



Innovation is the answer. We develop our own software from scratch, so we can keep up with the latest trends, yet offer lower costs to our customers since we are not tied to any third-party licensing from other companies. As our product and services are 100 per cent owned by Fort Digital, we are free to set our pricing and cut our costs to meet market demand.

— MR TEDDY JANDONIO,
Fort Digital



Building a culture that encourages constant innovation and feedback from the team. As digital trends are constantly changing, it's vital to stay at the forefront of our industry by testing new ideas and approaches. Additionally, in order to stay connected to consumers needs, the team needs to be empowered to share feedback so that the company can adapt fast.

— CALVIN WOON,
Zion Global Marketing

Our successful reputation of delivering solutions on time and adapting to our clients' needs is reflected in our enduring partnerships with them.

— MR PALANIAPPAN CHIDAMBARAM,
Union Consulting

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Brought to you by **SATURDAYCLUB**
right here right now

Re-imagining the retail experience

Online retailer SaturdayClub produces affordable fashion without compromising on quality

BY NIVANI ELANGOVAN

In a retail climate where local and international fashion labels leverage e-commerce platforms to achieve success, SaturdayClub finds itself right in the sweet spot.

The online retailer prides itself on creating a casual yet cosmopolitan style that is a mix of global trends with street influences for young women who love fashion as much as they do comfort.

Its chief operating officer Mr Ying Tze Her shares what sets them apart from the rest.

ON BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY
“We started out designing and producing for many white label retailers and understood the importance of quality. After a decade of experience, we decided to do away with the middle man margins and sell directly to customers at affordable price point.

We pride ourselves on quality — we own our factory with years of manufacturing experience to ensure that. I believe that our trendy newness, value and quality of our product, together with white-glove customer and last mile delivery services resonate well with the SaturdayClub woman — that's how we gauge our success.”

ON MARKETING TO THE SATURDAYCLUB WOMAN

“The SaturdayClub woman is a discerning buyer who appreciates quality clothing with good value. She is a woman who takes care of herself by dressing well at all times, whether she is in the office, out on a date or at a casual dinner. She is discerning, understands her fabric and knows a quality piece of clothing at good value.

We want to know their likes, dislikes, their dreams, and fears so that we can design clothes that make them confident. That is the perspective we take when designing each item.”

ON INFLUENCER MARKETING

“We believe in engaging our customers and building relationships with them. To us, it is not purely a merchant vis-à-vis customer transaction, but relationship building. This is where influencer marketing — a form of marketing that identifies individual who have influence over customers — comes into play. We turn to micro influencers for authenticity, and this has been a good platform to build trust with our audience.”

ON THE FUTURE

“Our plan is to keep evolving, and one way is by bringing the retail experience online. We want to give our customers that personalised customer experience, and we are excited to see how new technology can come into play.



“We ask ourselves if we can incorporate augmented reality to provide a better sizing chart, or improve customer service with artificial intelligence. Every step we make is done to improve the online experience.

“While constantly raising customer's expectations, we will also continue with our growth strategy of expanding internationally. This year, we will not only expand to more countries within Asia, but will venture to the United States and Europe in the later half of 2019. We want to grow the Singapore brand outwards, and we welcome like-minded folks who appreciate our products and believe in our business model to come on board as investors.”

Visit saturdayclub.com for more information.

Brought to you by **GIANTECH**



GIANTECH Engineering's forward-thinking approach has helped to secure its position as a key player in the maritime industry

GIANTECH Engineering managing director Mr Dilong Goh (centre), with his colleagues Mr Jerry Liu (left) and Ms Elina Kim.
PHOTO: NG HAN
HOW FOR GIANTECH ENGINEERING

BY HAFIZ RASID

GIANTECH Engineering has always been an early adopter of new technology. As early as 2004, the marine engineering services company began migrating its data to cloud computing, and a year later, became one of the first in the industry to implement a search engine optimisation strategy to increase brand awareness.

To solidify its presence in the maritime industry, it has led various data-mining initiatives with equipment makers and has started to explore possible applications of blockchain technology in the sector. In 2017, it collaborated with national movement SkillsFuture Singapore on the InnovPlus project — a competitive grant by the Institute for Adult Learning Singapore to address real-life learning challenges faced by organisations — to develop bite-sized learning modules on mobile applications.

ENJOYING AN EDGE
These activities have enabled GIANTECH

to remain at the forefront of technological innovation while other companies are busy playing catch-up. It is now exploring mobile performance support apps through collaborations with technological and industry partners to strengthen the maritime ecosystem.

Explains its co-founder and managing director Dilong Goh: “We regularly exchange and facilitate the exchange of information between our partners — original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), clients and industry counterparts.”

“In this digital day and age, we believe in fostering communication via a common digital platform where everyone can learn from one another. Be it a heartlands eatery with a local customer base or a small and medium-sized enterprise with a global presence like ours, today's Singaporean companies need to urgently adopt technology or be phased out in the next four years.”

LEADING BY EXAMPLE
GIANTECH is no stranger to embracing change. Ten years ago, Mr Goh had a hunch that

Singapore might not maintain its standing as an oil and gas building hub though it could be an important stopover for ships en route to other destinations.

His instinct paid off. While shipbuilding and retrofitting for the oil and gas sector suffered heavy losses in the wake of falling oil prices, GIANTECH's business grew by providing repairs and preventive maintenance for marine vessels operating in the region.

The decision to shift its focus earned the company a steady growth in revenue — from less than \$1 million in 2008 to \$3.9 million last year — an impressive feat for a company that started out as a one-man show in 2001.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Over the years, GIANTECH has seen its stable of OEMs grow significantly. It now represents one of the largest number of OEMs among its agent counterparts in the region. It has also successfully transitioned from a local engineering company to an international service veteran offering services for complex marine equipment such as boilers, inert gas systems and vibration compensators onboard vessels.

Customers, partners and manufacturers acknowledge GIANTECH's reputation for its knowledge and skills, and consistently delivering high-value engineering services.

Says Mr Goh: “We have developed a more global outlook as we deal with clients and partners from around the world. This has led to greater diversity within the team — some of our staff hail from Korea, China and Croatia — which better serves clients and partners from these markets.”

“Knowledge-focused, we are ever ready to dispatch our engineers to vessels, often in times of emergency, and they complete the job well.”

EYE ON THE FUTURE

GIANTECH has ambitious plans to grow its revenue by 30 per cent this year.

Following up on its efforts last year to diversify its portfolio, it will offer similar products and services for land-based industries such as power plants and paper mills.

Mr Goh shares that the company will also actively expand its understanding of knowledge management and organisational strategies, building on what it started a decade ago.

He hopes that this move will see the company further evolve from a seller of equipment and services to become a strategic partner for equipment makers and ship managers.

Visit www.giantech.com for more information.

Millennials making waves globally

Digital marketing consultancy Zion Global Marketing shares its secrets



PHOTOS: ZION GLOBAL MARKETING

BY MICHELLE BONG

Success is very much a numbers game for 10-year-old Zion Global Marketing. Twenty-eight full-time employees, aged between 20 and 35, work on projects spanning 26 countries in the areas of lead generation and events marketing and organisation that contribute to over \$7 million dollars in annual revenue.

Explains the company's director, Ms Patricia Lin: "For our clients, results are all that matters."

"They ask: 'How do I know the leads you have generated for me are qualified?', 'How do I know these leads will actually buy from me?'"

"Growing from a digital marketing agency trying to pitch digital marketing services, we implemented an events model where our clients could meet their prospects face to face and translate the leads into business. This then turns into an onsite return on investment for them, and gives them more reason to continue working with us."

Adding to the buzz is the company's youthful staff, who are bringing a new source of energy to the highly competitive industries of digital marketing and events.

Ms Lin and company co-founder Calvin Woon highlight three distinct qualities that set the company apart from its peers.

YOUTH AND INNOVATION

Says Ms Lin: "The only thing constant in business and in life is change. It is important to learn new strategies and share best practices to prevent ourselves from becoming obsolete. Our clients love working with us because we innovate and change the way we do things to generate bigger and better results every year."

"Zion is also made up of millennials who have grown up in the digital



Ms Lin and Mr Woon

age. Their youth and courage to experiment is possibly what drives the company to constantly do better. It has seen double-digit growth year on year. They are also more attuned to trend changes and movements in the digital marketing industry, which explains how they have been able to react and evolve as quickly."

UNDERSTANDING THE BUSINESS GAME

Adds Mr Woon: "Doing business is like playing sports; you need to know the rules and what it takes to win. Gamifying various aspects of the business makes work more fun and exciting for everyone on the team."

"Each year, we conduct an internal review of the past year's performance, and a separate review with our clients. We set training objectives to improve our game plan and re-evaluate our targets and performance metrics to constantly raise the bar. This explains why our growth in the past three years alone has been phenomenal."

A HUNGER TO BE RECOGNISED AS SINGAPORE'S FINEST

Zion has plans to expand to Europe



Brought to you by



Zion's team (top) has been behind many business and investing events such as Investor Wealth Summit (above).

and the Asia-Pacific region in the next few years. The Internet has enabled it to tap into a worldwide market — while based in Singapore — to conduct over 150 events annually in cities and countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan, Switzerland and San Francisco.

Says Ms Lin: "Our company's mission is to help small businesses generate more leads and customers using the Internet. As small business owners ourselves, we know how much effort, time and sweat is involved. We not only provide lead generation services, but also conduct training to help business owners market themselves online."

Visit www.zionglobalmarketing.com for more information.

Alternative health therapies

Some are turning to holographic wellness technology to address common health issues such as aches and pains



PHOTOS: ENERGY WAVE WORLDWIDE

Brought to you by



Energy Wave

Many want to enjoy the benefits of good health, preferably in ways not intrusive to the body. For this, they have turned to Energy Wave Worldwide (EWW), a Singapore-based company offering complementary natural remedies for some of today's most common ailments.

First launched in Seoul last February, it is a key player in the holographic wellness market — an industry not many Singaporeans are aware of.

Holographic wellness technology deals with health and wellness products in the form of silicon holographic discs. Such products mimic the biometric patterns of natural sources such as healing plants and herbs, which are then imprinted on holographic discs and released as healing vibrations when placed at appropriate meridian points on the body.

Release is triggered by the heat differential between the disc and the skin, which sends data conducted along the meridians to promote its healing effects. Known as transdermal transmission (the delivery of active ingredients across the skin for systemic distribution), the effect is similar to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), but with a sustained effect 24/7 without using drugs, chemicals or needles.

EAST MEETS WEST

EWW's range of products has been developed to leverage on east-meets-west medical knowledge working on the body meridian points.

Its spokesperson Dr A Abraham explains: "Wave frequencies of healing

energy have always existed as part of nature. It is only in recent times that we are able to understand more and begin to harness it for our benefit."

Energy Wave combines TCM and scalar wave technology — longitudinal waves responsible for DNA and cell-to-cell communication first discovered in the late 19th Century by physicist Nikola Tesla. He was best known for his contributions to the study of electricity and electromagnetism.

Together, these components work like an acupuncture treatment without the need for needles, and has no side effects.

This technology can be found in EWW's three variant wristbands Vital, Calm and Max to improve stamina, induce restful recuperating sleep and gain healthy muscle mass.

Discs for specific concerns are also available, for the relief of clogged nasal passages and pain symptoms and to help the body detoxify more efficiently.

Its most popular product is the Comfort

Sleeve energy patch, which helps to fight inflammation (commonly referred to as "heatiness" as in TCM lingo), and supports pain relief.

PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH

EWW is committed to bringing more wellness products to meet the everyday needs of the market by taking advantage of digital technology.

Adds its executive director Jared Ang (right): "We are looking to help people feel and live better without reliance on additive substances or invasive procedures."

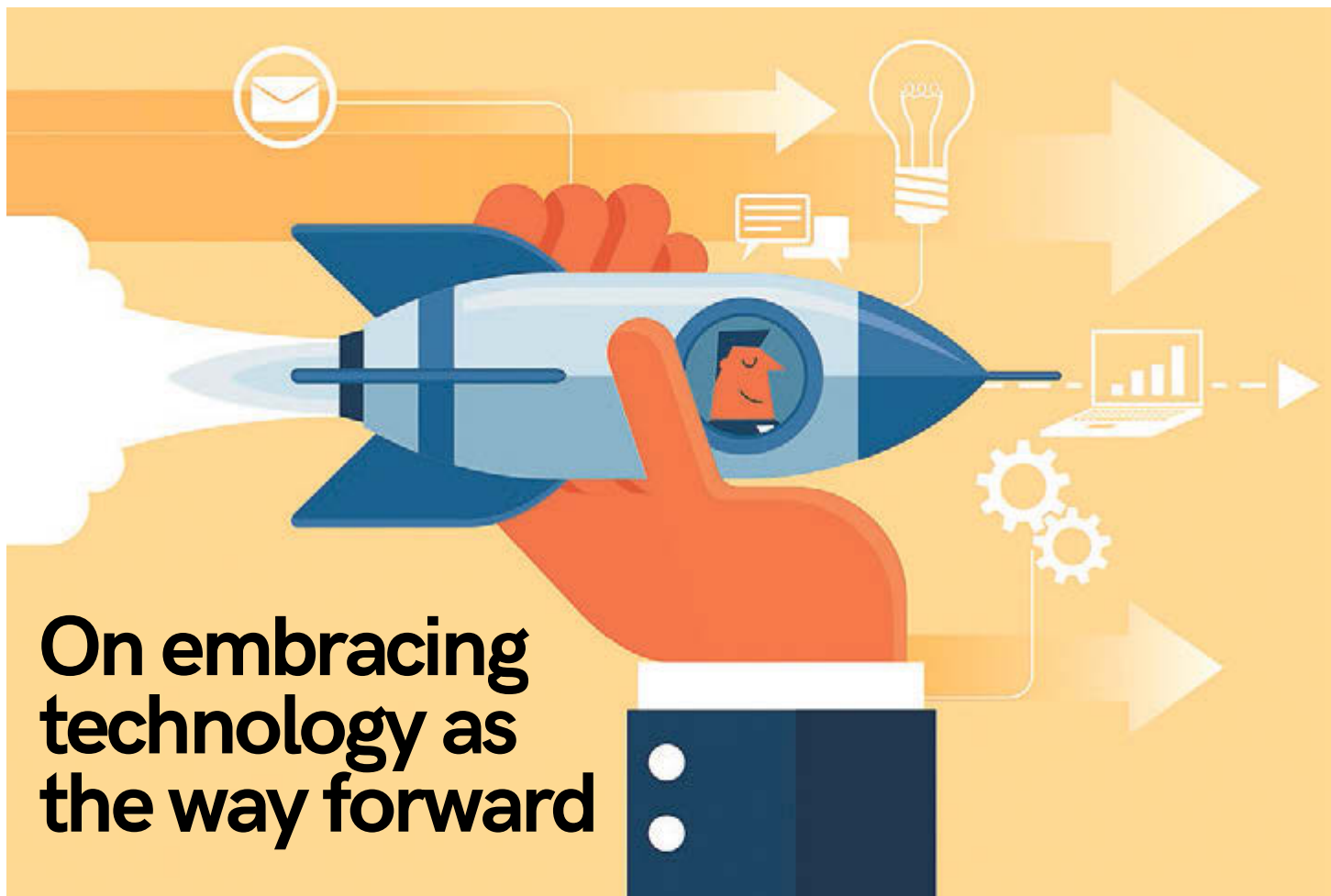
"By embracing healing energy products by EWW, one can neutralise the harmful effects and harness the healing benefits of a sensible lifestyle, appropriate physical activity and wholesome dietary habits."

Visit energywaveworldwide.com for more information.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Best foot forward



On embracing technology as the way forward

PHOTO: ISTOCK



Ongoing research in digital technology is opening up possibilities in quantum healing techniques. EWW is active in this area; we are extremely excited about this, and believe that expanding digital technology has great potential in our mission to support our clients' health in ever expanding ways.

— MR JARED ANG,
Energy Wave Worldwide



Customers are demanding it. Now it's not a choice that can be made by a service provider, but a default necessity, to provide digital, omni-channel or artificial intelligence with some form of natural intelligence capabilities to its customers. For traditional players, it's a do or die situation! If they don't transition to digital — and soon — disruptors will displace them eventually.

— MR JAYESH PAJWANI,
Tetherfi



Small and medium-sized enterprise owners must quickly understand that digitalisation is no longer just having a website, or answering your customers on e-mail or Facebook. It is also no longer just a way for a company to look up-to-date — it's necessary for basic survival to stay viable.

— MR DILONG GOH,
Giantech Engineering

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Helping banks manage risk better



Unison Consulting successfully delivers integrated risk management solutions for global financial institutions

BY JO-ANN HUANG

The top five banks in Asia and a British multi-national bank have all turned to Unison Consulting for system integration, implementation and consultancy services for their risk management and compliance frameworks. And for good reason.

This boutique next-generation technology company, which comes in at number 27 on the Singapore's Fastest Growing Companies 2019 list, was launched in 2012 to address a pressing need.

Explains one of its three founding directors, Mr Palaniappan Chidambaram: "There was a dearth of specialist players in the regulatory and risk space to perform end-to-end implementations and consulting."

He adds that banks were struggling to meet the stringent and ever-changing regulatory needs in credit and liquidity standards. In some cases, growth was sacrificed in order to meet compliance standards.

Unison's consultants provided interpretation services of the regulatory rules and offered a suite of cost-effective solutions targeting performance, accuracy and flexibility when it came to regulatory changes.

A POWERHOUSE IN THE MAKING

The company has grown from a five-man operation to an organisation with 55 staff. It has incorporated an office in India and Malaysia.

The founding directors have a combination of over 40 years of industry expertise between them to offer their clients a thorough understanding of regulatory needs in the banking and financial sector.

Mr Chidambaram and co-founder Mr Dinesh Pappen have a decade of experience each working with banks in Asia. Meanwhile, Mr Ghouse Peer Mulla, Unison's third founder, has more than 13 years of experience in consulting, and has delivered the early adoption of Basel II regulations. The latter is an international business standard requiring financial institutions to maintain enough cash reserves to cover risks incurred by operations.

This Singapore-based company also offers the custom development of IT

solutions, along with project management expertise and technology consulting — which spans data warehousing, business intelligence and analysis, and custom development — for financial institutions.

These services, says Mr Ghouse, are what today's banks are looking for in order to work as efficiently as possible to meet changing regulations amid growing spreads and an expanding regional and even global footprint.

PROVIDING A GROWING SUITE OF SOLUTIONS

Unison's innovative consultants also leverage strong business interests in liquidity risk, market risk and regulatory compliance to create integrated solutions that ensure efficient monitoring, improve risk appetite of the financial institutions and comply with regulations.

One avenue for this is Risk Insight for Regulatory Reporting, Unison's next-generation flagship product. The first product built completely using Big Data it features scenario-based reporting to define internal stress factors to assess risk.

This helps banks to manage their risk profiles and quickly adapt to regulatory changes.

When asked if he was satisfied with the business growth to date, Mr Chidambaram says: "So far, we have done well but we want to rise to the challenge of taking things to the next level. We will continue to invest in designing and building tools and products using new technology, and change the technological landscape — using our expertise to win projects rather than rely on traditional marketing and sales."

Unison is well-gearred for future challenges. Demand for Big Data solutions, Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence-based products will grow, and Unison will continue working on next-generation products in the same vein as Risk Insight for Regulatory Reporting.

The company intends to expand its global footprint by building compliance solutions for banks in South Asia, Australia and China.

Visit unisonconsulting.com.sg for more information.



From left: Mr Dinesh Pappen, Mr Palaniappan Chidambaram and Mr Ghouse Peer Mulla
PHOTOS: UNISON CONSULTING, ISTOCK

Carving out a niche

BY MEREDITH WOO

To increase Singapore's total port capacity to 65 million TEUs annually by 2040, a mega Tuas Terminal Reclamation Project is currently in progress with dredging company KSE Marine Works involved in a part of the massive operation.

For its latest project with Hyundai Engineering & Construction (E&C), the Singapore-based company was tasked to deepen the seabed in the Tuas area and use the dredged materials to form land.

It provides the crucial service of dredging and land reclamation works that is necessary not just to clean, widen and deepen the sea, but also helps in flood mitigation and minimising coastal erosion prevalent on beaches.

KSE's expertise in dredging and land reclamation work is well-known in the industry, having built up a reputation as the go-to partner for clients such as Hyundai E&C, Penta-Ocean Construction and Santaril Construction.

The company excavates and eliminates material (usually soft clay as sand is in short supply) from the deep sea or ocean, which is then used to form and fill land.

It does so by employing sophisticated machines called dredgers (in variants from backhoe to grab to

Having the expertise in dredging and reclamation work gives KSE Marine Works an edge over others in the construction industry



bucket ladder) that act as suction devices at deep harbours, or clear waterways. Other machinery in its fleet include anchor boats, tug boats and auxiliary vessels.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH
Having a variety of dredging and supporting machinery makes KSE well-equipped to work on any type of marine-based project.

It has evolved since its inception in early 2000 when it supplied dredging pumps components to become one of the leading river dredging companies in Asia. It has also expanded its reach to carry out work in regional cities such as Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Myanmar. Its clients include Petronas, Inai Kiara and Iskandar Regional Development Authority.

Its director Sean Kim (left) explains: "Our growth and expansion has been due to several factors. Firstly, there has been an

increased demand for dredging works in Singapore. This is due to our growing population and the limitation of land to accommodate the population. Reclamation is essential to expand our landmass to mitigate the problem.

"Next, we gained a competitive advantage by minimising our overheads through value-added partnerships with other dredging-related and marine companies. This leads to win-win situations as we can share our resources while working on a project together.

"The design trend in Singapore is evolving to be less reliant on sand for reclamation and more towards using soft clay. From the Tuas project, we have gained experience and technical knowledge to build up much higher land by using soft clay. We have also deployed a special reclaimer barge to carry out a higher level of infilling using soft clay or dredged materials.

"As a result, our revenue has been steadily increasing over the last five years. It was \$8 million in 2017 and \$15

million in 2018. This year, we expect to hit over \$30 million."

Along the way, KSE has overcome challenges such as difficulties in securing financial support from local financial institutes even though a large project had already been awarded to the company.

"We overcame the problem by reaching out to close friends and partners for support; and gladly, they believed in us. We are truly grateful for their help," he says.

On the company's growth so far, Mr Kim says he feels KSE has come a long way but this could not have been possible without all of its staff and partners.

He has hopes that the company will become the top dredging contractor in Singapore and Asia.

"To achieve our dream, we will continue to strive to provide our value-added services at competitive prices," he adds.

Visit ksemarine.com for more information.



KSE Marine Works has the biggest excavator in Singapore. PHOTOS: KSE MARINE WORKS

FORT DIGITAL®

A SBO Licensed SMS Telecommunication Company

Formed in 2002 as a system Integrator for projects mainly in Singapore, Fort Digital has since evolved and expanded into other IT-related products and services — mostly the communication sector during the rise of the cell phone boom, notably within the SMS industry.

SMS was once a very costly system to be implemented in small and medium size companies, and were mostly enjoyed by bigger businesses or the government sector only. But Fort Digital introduced affordable SMS product and services across a wide range of industry sectors.

These include Reminder and Notification SMS, Marketing SMS, Emergency SMS, Event Registration and Management System and One-time-password SMS, creating a whole new level of communication among companies and their customers across multiple sectors.

By 2008, Fort Digital was connected to almost every single Telecommunication company in South East Asia, leveraging Signaling System 7 and Short Message Peer-to-Peer connectivity to deliver high speed and SMS. By 2010, the company was one of the main players in Singapore.

To date, Fort Digital has received numerous accolades and awards, and has been featured in several publications for its involvement in projects and participation in high profile events such as the National Day Parade.

Fort Digital currently enjoys one of the highest levels of SMS throughput in Singapore, broadcasting close to half a million SMS per hour. Via 35 Binds technology, the company's dedicated server distributes workloads and balancing to all binds, making this incredible sending speed possible.

Queue Management System (Zero Wiring QMS with SMS)

Fort Digital has spent countless hours and effort to develop its own products and services, including the Queue Management System (QMS) that involves no wiring, low costs and is deployable anywhere in the world without any need for heavy infrastructure. This is a breakthrough product that can reduce deployment costs by 50 per cent as compared with other conventional queue systems.

Power Failure & Smoke Detector Call and SMS Alert System

Fort Digital has also developed its own hardware, notably power failure detectors and smoke detectors that instantly alert home, office, warehouse, or data centre owners via a call and SMS. A totally independent system that does not require an internet connection or an app, it is powered by an internal battery to support operations should there be a power failure or power outage. It is currently patent pending in Singapore.

Fort Digital would like to thank our partners and clients for all their support and trust over the years. We hope to grow further and innovate new products and technologies for the advancement of Singapore.

All SMS Solutions (OTP, Emergency, Marketing, etc)
Queue Management System (Zero Wiring QMS)
Event Registration and Check-In System
Power Failure & Smoke Detector SMS System

www.FortDigital.com.sg
www.Emergency.sg



Mr Jandiono Teddy
Founder & Director